

School of Theology at Claremont



1001 1336159



The Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT

WEST FOOTHILL AT COLLEGE AVENUE
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

Read
Indexed

DISCARD

LIFE'S TRUE VALUES

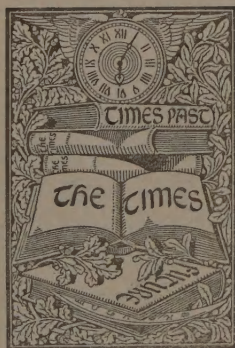
BY
4510
A1
L5

LIFE'S TRUE VALUES

SELECTED ESSAYS FROM "THE TIMES"

ARRANGED BY
SIR JAMES MARCHANT
K.B.E., LL.D.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK



These Articles are reprinted by permission of

The Times

LONDON: H. R. ALLENSON, LIMITED
7 RACQUET COURT, 114 FLEET STREET, E.C.

Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

*Printed in Great Britain:
by Turnbull & Spears, Edinburgh*

FOREWORD

BY THE MOST REV.
THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

IT is a striking illustration of the present widespread interest in religion that a great newspaper like *The Times* should have given a column, week by week, for several years, to an essay dealing directly with the moral and spiritual life. Many of these essays have qualities of style, of thought, of spirit, which make it natural to wish that they should be preserved in a form more accessible than the files of a newspaper. Accordingly, in this book a selection and a re-arrangement of them have been made, and I have been asked by Sir James Marchant to write a few words of introduction to it. I have no personal knowledge of the anonymous authors. I write simply as one of the many readers of *The Times* who, Saturday by Saturday, have been interested, stimulated, and helped by these essays. We found it a relief, a welcome change, to turn from the record of passing things to these reminders of the things that are eternal. From

men of all sorts and conditions—preachers, teachers, politicians, soldiers, sailors, men of business—I have often heard words of gratitude to the authors for writing these essays, and to *The Times* for publishing them.

The present time may not be marked by religious observance, but it is assuredly marked by religious interest, inquiry, aspiration. Whatever else the tremendous experience of the Great War has done, it has set men thinking, questioning, caring about the fundamental problems of life, of the spirit, of God. Often those who say least are thinking most. Again, there is a strong movement away from the materialistic philosophy which, if rarely formulated, was widely assumed towards the conviction that, as Goethe said, "The spiritual is alone the real"—that spiritual values stand for the highest degree of reality, and that the only ultimate reality is God. And when men begin to care about the preservation and vindication of spiritual values and desire to know God as spirit knows Spirit, they are inevitably brought with a new intensity of interest and expectation to the gracious and commanding figure of Jesus Christ. As one of the authors of these essays says: "Goodness, truth, and beauty can only be attained as they are seen in a person, for only

then do they evoke that goodness, truth and beauty which lie dormant in ourselves. If personal being is ignored, such terms as righteousness, love, truth, are mere words without life, without meaning. It is because Christianity proclaims their existence in a Person that it can produce that ardour and glow which fires the spirit of man to make the ideal a reality in his own personal experience and gives him power to express it in terms of his own life."

But many of those who are thus finding their own way to the Christian Faith are hindered rather than helped by the conventional language in which that Faith is often expressed. Such language does not interpret their own experience. It carries with it associations which are not real to them. It seems to me that it is to such men and women that these essays have made, and are fitted to make, a special appeal. For they avoid the technical terms of theology and phrases which have become to many formal and unreal. They are written with a wide outlook on human life, and with a very full sympathy with the difficulties, the tendencies and the desires of the modern world. Yet they are filled with a deep reverence for the great Christian tradition, and along many and varied avenues of thought they lead the reader to Him Who is its source and

abiding centre. In their divers portions and divers manners they keep to one main purpose—to vindicate to this generation the claim of Christ, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

COSMO EBOR:

BISHOPTHORPE, YORK

February 7th, 1923

CONTENTS

LIFE

	PAGE
1. AT THE DOOR	13
2. THE AVERAGE MAN	17
3. THE WORTH OF TIME	22
4. MANHOOD'S WORTH	27
5. SELF-KNOWLEDGE	32
6. OPPORTUNITY	36
7. CIRCUMSTANCE	41
8. HIDDEN RESOURCES	46
9. MORAL STANDARDS	50
10. LIFE'S PURPOSE	55
11. THE SECRET OF PERSONALITY	60
12. THE DIGNITY OF WORK	64
13. DIFFICULTIES	69
14. CONSCIOUS FAILURE	74

CONDUCT

15. HONESTY	81
16. DUTY	86
17. PRUDENCE	91
18. PATIENCE	96
19. MERCY	101
20. IMAGINATION	106
21. THE SECRET OF REST	111
22. CERTAINTY	116

	PAGE
23. FRIVOLITY	121
24. THE SIN OF STUPIDITY	126
25. SELF-DECEIT	131
26. SHAME	136
27. RETRIBUTION	140
28. RECREATED MANHOOD	145
29. SOCIAL PROGRESS	150

ACHIEVEMENT

30. UNCHANGING PRINCIPLES	157
31. THE GREAT QUEST	162
32. FAITH AND LIFE	166
33. THINGS THAT MATTER	170
34. ETERNITY IN THE HEART	174
35. FORMALISM	178
36. REVERENCE	182
37. OBSTACLES TO RELIGION	187
38. RELIGIOUS SENSIBILITY	191
39. THE SIN OF IGNORANCE	196
40. THE WILL TO BELIEVE	201
41. CONSTRUCTIVE CHRISTIANITY	206
42. CRISIS AND CHARACTER	210
43. OVERCOMING THE WORLD	214
44. REDEEMING THE TIME	218
45. EASTER FAITH	222
46. RELIGION AS REDEMPTION	227
47. UNANSWERED QUESTIONS	231
48. LIGHT FROM HEAVEN	236

LIFE

I

AT THE DOOR

Rev 3 20
Temp

THE traditional language used by the Church in Advent presupposes a world in which sudden changes may be expected. There is One near, even at the door; for those who will be quiet the sound of the knocking fills the halls of life. The songs and lessons of the season are appropriate on the lips of a company bestirring itself to meet some fresh and startling call. They are the liturgy of the fourth watch, which comes before the dawn.

But how is the preacher to give reality and immediacy to such language? How can he relate it to the interests and motives of the average man? He may disregard the tradition altogether, but if he takes his place within it at all, he must be able to show cause for the urgent language, and to make clear Who is He that stands at the door and why He knocks. It may be discovered that there are within the Church many to whom this language has but a senti-

mental value ; they experience a thrill, borrowed from other days ; that is all.

The preacher who wishes to speak to the condition of such hearers may cease for a while to think in terms of vast cosmic movements, or to speak of the world in terms of things ; to him the knocking comes not from a Power described in abstract language, but from a Person whose name and purpose are known. He is a Person, and He seeks admission into a personal life. He is a Spirit, and " spirit with spirit can meet." For other Advents the soul may need to wait ; for this spiritual Advent—the incoming of the Lord Christ—there is no need to wait ; He is at the door.

Such a preacher will enforce with all the earnestness at his command the immediate issue ; he will bid each soul without waiting for others to open the door. It is not necessary to this end to let the mind be absorbed with the future of this planet, or to let it lose itself in the attempt to trace the destiny of nations ; the One Whose voice he hears as though from without, has to do with all things in heaven and on earth, but in the delight of speculation the mind may lose the bearing of the Advent message upon the individual life. It is with this Advent which need not be deferred that the preacher

has chiefly to do. Of times and seasons he can know nothing ; with things he has not to do in the first place, but with the personal life, the secrets of which and the powers of which are still so largely hidden. If he can awaken some hard-pressed soul, longing to be free, to the faith that there are spiritual reinforcements waiting for him, not after a long delay but now, he has given a real meaning never to be lost to the ancient language of Advent.

A beginning, if it is no more, can be made here. The facts to be related are these ; on the one side man seeking for goodness, which can only be his with the entrance into his life of One Who brings forgiveness and the new birth and the power to endure. The other fact is the presence at the door of One Whose chief concern is to give to men, not so much an answer to their problems as a deliverance from their sin. The task of the preacher in Advent is to bring together the soul in its need and the One Who is waiting to enter across the threshold. Or sometimes the task is simply to call for a silence in the house of life that the knocking may be heard.

If the first concern of the preacher is with the inner personal life, then there is no reason to discard the thought of crisis and of sudden

actions. The entrance of the new life may not be as sudden as it seems ; long preparations may have led to the moment when in the hush the loud knocking is heard and the soul opens, and its Lord enters in to sup with him. But in the personal life there is always a place for crisis ; the spiritual life is not one long steady progress ; it has its moments, in which more is wrought than in years.

The message of Advent to the soul of man is one which can only be interpreted in the light of the action of one personality upon another. All analogies break down here. We are in a strange world, over great tracts of which the geographer must write *terra incognita*. But enough is known to justify the preacher to make the promise that, the door being opened, there will come into life a grace and truth whose touch will be new life and hope and peace. A Christian preacher is in order when he offers the promises of Advent to any who without tarrying will unlatch the door. There are other great and tremendous truths to be remembered ; the wise and learned will discuss the bearing of the Advent message upon the meaning of progress ; others will soar into cosmic heights ; but the man who has the Divine Guest to sup with him has an Advent of his own.

II

THE AVERAGE MAN

DEMOCRITUS laughed at the follies and vanities of mankind, and thought his fellows worthy of nothing better than derision. Why should they be distracted by the fortunes of life? Their brief existence had no purpose. All ended in oblivion. Heraclitus, on the other hand, found only cause for weeping as he contemplated the ignorance of men and their obtuseness. They must be left to the miserable doom of fate. Neither of these philosophers had any hope of human progress.

We still retain a too pessimistic estimate of the worth and possibilities of man's life. If we do not judge it to be altogether evil, we rarely regard it as capable of attaining true excellence. We are content if men show sufficient honesty to make business possible and sufficient regard for morality to maintain our social conventions. We are unwilling to consider any higher conception of human attainment. We doubt its possibility. Commonplace aims dominate our

religion. We are satisfied to acknowledge its claims and to comply with its rules so long as they are not too exacting. But when we are bidden to accept ideals which transcend this world, and for their sake be prepared to forfeit its prizes, we plead the feebleness of human nature and reveal our practical disbelief in the possibilities of the soul.

The saints of the Church offer us a corrective against this low view of human nature. They discount our cynical estimate. If we remember all that they were, and what those who belong to their company still are among us, we can no longer plead that our manhood is of too poor stuff for perfection. These men and women share our nature, they are but average folk in their weaknesses and failures. But we have only to think of what the saints have done in the world to acknowledge that, above all others, they are its chief benefactors. No men and women have done more for the welfare of their fellows than these witnesses to the efficiency of goodness. It is because they are not less but greater than we are that we are so conscious of disparity when we compare them with ourselves. It is not their lack of manliness but the sheer strength of their manhood that enables them to give themselves to the activities

of that spiritual world which seems so unreal to most of us weaker men.

It is not to be denied that our misconception of saintliness, with our habit of thinking it impossible for us, is partly due to the Church's own error. Too often it has called men to abandon immediate duty or forfeit present rights as the necessary condition of sanctity. It is true that the Master of the Saints bade His followers cut off hand or foot or pluck out the eye if any of these proved a hindrance in the ventures of the soul. But this did not mean that men could not attain the best within themselves except by mutilation. The boat must throw away its cargo if by that means alone it can be saved; but it were higher aim to carry its full freight to harbour. Hermits, monks, ascetics, and puritans have saved their souls, but it has been at great loss. The cost may be justified; sometimes it may be necessary to pay it in their coin. Yet it were better to save the whole man; and this is the Divine will for each of us.

The Church is the society for fashioning saints, and it must needs believe that this is possible for every one of its members. The leaders of the Church in the first ages were content with no lower ambition. All the baptized were called to

be saints. The Church took men and women, manifestly stained with sin, often weakened and debased by deliberate evil living, and by its discipline, its provision of the means of grace, its gospel of redemption, and its confidence in the presence and power of its Lord fashioned them after His likeness. It provided the energies of the supernatural life to transfigure men's natural powers. It gave them a renewed, cleansed, re-invigorated manhood. They were not less but more than they were before, with clearer and purer thoughts, larger and freer activities, by right of their manhood in the enfranchisement of saintliness.

We discount the worth of the average man. We find few possibilities of spiritual progress in his commonplace life. When we are challenged by the standard of saintliness we are always ready with excuses for refusing to accept it. We demand that the Church should be more practical. We are struggling against economic anarchy, against social distress, against poverty, all of which rob us of the satisfactions which manifestly the world might give us in more propitious conditions. We bid the Church interest itself in these matters. Yet its chief task is clear. It must pass beyond man's circumstances to his character. If it seeks to heal men's bodies, it

The Average Man

21

must tend their souls. It must enlarge their lives. It must fashion saints.

The saint is the only really successful man. Others may gain wealth or social influence; others may give to their fellows works which they will not willingly let die. The saints give them something greater, something which cannot die, something of larger powers and greater influence, the grace of supernatural virtue. They witness to the triumph of truth, purity, and moral beauty. They bespeak the splendour of saintliness in every man. They reveal the true worth of human life. To refuse their testimony is to deny our manhood.

III

THE WORTH OF TIME

ON New Year's Day men look to the future. It is with a sense of relief that they turn from the retrospect which seemed inevitable in the closing hours of the old year to greet the days before them, with their offer of new opportunities. A year is a well-recognized length of time to mark our journey through the world, and for thoughtful men there must be an element of solemnity in the fact that one more such span of life is opening before them. The gift of time brings a sense of new life, but its worth depends on our use of it.

From Kant to Bergson philosophers have discussed the nature of time. Their debates are not for the plain man. He does not theorize about time; he has to live it. It is sufficient for him to know that time is the very stuff of life, and that it is exceedingly precious. At best we live but a few fleeting years. We have but a short time. Literature has expressed the consciousness of life's brevity in some of its most



moving pages. Those who regard life as but a stage in an endless existence, alike with those who look for no prolongation of its mystery beyond death, agree in recognizing time's immense worth. From primitive ages men have measured it with care as if aware that it must be husbanded. Water-glasses, sand-glasses, candles, sundials, and clocks of every description show how in all ages the responsibility for putting this precious gift of time to proper use has been recognized.

We need not flinch before the consciousness of life's brevity. It is no justification for rebellion or despair. The greatest spiritual and moral service has been accomplished by men spurred to self-sacrifice and effort by the sense of the shortness of the time allowed them. The Life which has most deeply affected mankind was ended almost before it reached the flower of its manhood. [Every day as it dawned the Church of the Apostles thought might be the last day, the day of the Lord. Short was the time allowed them to announce His coming. This conviction roused them to resistless energy and inspired them to unreserved self-sacrifice.] Experience compelled them to modify their hopes, but without the spur of time's brevity we may believe Christianity would have lingered too long

among a few devoted adherents fearing to step out boldly into the world.

Time cannot be used well by anyone who is not invigorated by a definite purpose. It ceases to exist for those who do not husband it and put it to a good account. It slips past the listless, the distracted, or the followers of mere pleasure. Such men are constantly declaring that they have no time. Some there are who in sheer idleness "kill time." They are the destroyers of opportunity. He that would use time well must put it to a definitely formed purpose, and making the object of his life's desire pure and noble, harness it to his effort that it may bear him on to eternal life. Time by its very nature is always coming to its end. So many years we have lived, and they are all numbered, and we cannot tell how many more remain, but, be they many or few, their worth will not be measured by mere duration. Some men live in a moment what to their fellows comes only in a lifetime, and days there are in most lives which in their tragedy or exultation bring an experience which transcends the measures of all the other years of life, a foretaste of that eternity to whose threshold time is always carrying us.

Lecky once pointed out that modern civiliza-

tion has increased our time. Not only do men live longer with a vigour which continues to old age, but many contrivances for economizing time have made each day longer in its possibilities. We have more of life's stuff than our fathers. Probably most of us do more than they did. This does not necessarily imply that we make better use of time. Mere activity does not secure its best use, and greater length of life does not necessarily imply that its worth is increased. That depends on ourselves and what we make of it, or rather it depends on what we make of ourselves in it. For time is opportunity for shaping character, purifying desire, and for the discipline of the will. Its true measure cannot be stated in terms of days, months, and years, but in its results attained in personality. What we do is in time, and sooner or later is a memory, if it does not altogether fade into nothingness. What we are issues from time to abide for ever.

Men confess this fact, often unconsciously, as they meet the New Year with resolutions for the future. He is an unhappy man who does not frame them to-day with a braced, determined will. Time ever hurries on. Out of a mysterious future it passes on through the fleeting present to the irrevocable past. A fountain of hope, it

brings its present opportunities so soon to pass into the still, dark pool of memory. It belongs to this world alone. There can be no such thing as time apart from a finite creation, but the life it shapes remains when the world has passed away. We are free to make of time what we will.

Time is the measure of passing opportunity, which if used well fashions all that eternity can mean to us, and becomes the agent of all blessedness. If we feel its mysteriousness we may be content to use it resolutely, humbly, and hopefully. If we must needs be sobered by the recollections of its brevity, we may be encouraged by its possibilities. Those who have discovered the true worth of time know that

Life is a fixed, discerning light,
A knowing joy;
No chance, or fit; but ever bright,
And calm, and full, yet doth not cloy.

Life is, what none can express,
A quickness, which my God hath kissed.

IV

MANHOOD'S WORTH

possibilities
It is easy to estimate the worth of our manhood too cheaply. Many of us have never gauged its true capacities: we are ready to sell it for the merest bauble, for the gratification of a whim, or in sheer neglect to treat it as worthless. Often men estimate their life in terms of money, reputation, pleasure, or passion, judging it to be nothing more than the power to satisfy their passing desires. To those who indulge in this perverted arithmetic in moral values life can have but small possibilities and little meaning. They do not know that its true value cannot be measured in terms of this world's commerce.

How shall we gain a true estimate of what we are and what we may become? He who asked, What will a man give in exchange for his life? evidently knew of no market where a sound transaction could be made for life, for what we call personality. We cannot find an equivalent for it. Nothing can compensate for its sale or barter, or the desperate futility of a man who is

his own manhood's spendthrift. It is impossible to estimate the worth of personality in terms of anything but itself. Its value must be judged by the nature of its own experience. Its true strength and capacities remain undiscovered until it manifests itself in the light of truth. For this reason so many never learn the real value of their manhood.

To all of us there comes the opportunity of learning the truth about ourselves. When it does come, we are bewildered by the revelation of our manhood's present power and its amazing possibilities, seen in the light of the invisible and eternal realities which surround us. It is not that we ourselves are changed by that light. We are what we are, but every latent quality, every hidden power manifests itself in its true character. It is our transfiguration. We make our great discovery, the discovery of our own manhood, to find ourselves endowed with powers infinitely above our accustomed thought. We are sons of light. And this revelation of ourselves to ourselves never issues in self-conceit, for that is based rather on a disparagement of our fellows than on a true estimate of ourselves. The revelation which shows us the worth of our own manhood proves that in other men there is also all the glory of that life of which

we have caught a glimpse in ourselves. The light of our own transfiguration sheds its rays of glory over our fellows.

It is remarkable that the evangelic record of Christ's transfiguration has attracted so little attention. The evangelists evidently regarded it as one of the great events in the Master's life. It was the summit of His career. There and then He was manifested in His true character. It was a revelation of what He was, and it was given not only to the three bewildered apostles, but to Christ Himself. He learnt in His transfiguration all that He was by right of the humanity which He had dedicated to the service of His Father in His mission to the world. At that moment the Son of Man knew with quickened consciousness the potencies of that manhood which He shared with all the sons of men. He and they must turn to pain and toil, but it was with the knowledge that by right of their manhood they had capacities of responsive affection to God and were appointed to live as citizens of His glorious Kingdom. Thomas Erskine, of Linlathen, remarks in his essay on "The Spiritual Order," that our consciousness of moral qualities within us refers us to an entirely different kind of order from that which is of this world. It shows us powers which we can possess only

because we rightly live in the grace of a supernatural world. When once we have learned that truth we know our true status in the hierarchy of life.

Such a knowledge comes sooner or later to all men who find themselves in the Divine presence. It may come in the dark night of trouble, when the world seems to have left us on that lonely road where there is no companion, and the sights and sounds of the world are submerged in the awful silence which overcomes the soul. Or perhaps it may come in the hour of high inspiration, when we are challenged to a task which seems so far above our powers. Then, like Joan of Arc in the woods of Domrémy, we hear the summons to go forth to meet the enemy, and know that we are destined to be the victors by right of the powers with which we have been endowed. Some have found their transfiguration in the sheer joy of responsive affection for the lover or the child. The strange potencies of life become manifest in different ways, men find themselves possessed of higher powers than they imagined. The light of the Spirit has come upon them, and they are revealed in the glory of their transfiguration.

Those who have accepted the assurance of this glory of life retain its splendour in their hearts.

It never quite vanishes. It not only abides in the memory, it remains a living force. The consciousness of that which is spiritual is part of themselves. In its light a man learns to interpret all his experience. The commonplace things of the world have a new significance for him. They are suffused with a new glory. To eyes which have acquired a new power of vision, beauty is discovered in the most forbidding objects.

The psychologist may probe into the recesses of our manhood, and seek to account for human experience in terms of his science. His task is not without value. But when he has finished it there remains what is above his measures and outside his classifications. He cannot account for what we are. Understanding, memory, will, the love of truth, beauty, goodness, are all recognized. But there is something else. It is seen only in the light which shines on the Mountain of the Transfiguration. Until we have placed ourselves within its radiance we are strangers to ourselves, and our estimate of life for ourselves and for others is gravely deficient.

V

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

PSYCHOLOGISTS insist at once on the importance and the difficulty of self-knowledge. Self-consciousness is the special possession of men, the power which lies at the basis of our conception of personality. Only in modern times have we learned to appreciate its true significance. Nowadays we all recognize it as a dominant element in our experience and as the means of self-knowledge.

So far as it can be attained, it should be considered to have precedence of all other knowledge. It may at least help us to give an answer to two questions of primary importance in morals: What ought I to be? and, What am I in reality? There is no prospect of a satisfactory reply to either until we are ready to deal with both. Here, if anywhere, the ideal must be held to be the real, and what we are is a more or less dim shadow of it.

Autobiographical works often show writers who have but an imperfect acquaintance with

themselves. But we are the less surprised by this when we observe in our contact with others in the business and pleasures of life how often men labour under the strangest delusions as to their own character. They have no intention to appear to be other than they are. Conscious deceit would be abhorrent to them, but we know them to be quite different from their own estimate of themselves. Indeed, this experience is so general that we are driven to the suspicion that we are all the victims of a similar self-ignorance.

Men have tried to avoid this misapprehension of themselves by sedulous and painful self-examination, shrinking from no humiliation in order to arrive at the truth. We must needs respect the energy and persistence of these attempts at self-discovery. They are not without their reward, for in this way men have acquired strength of moral purpose against dangers to which we are all exposed, and have also learned how to be on their guard against weaknesses peculiar to themselves. But not infrequently those who engage in this task of self-analysis cannot be congratulated on the results of their efforts. Men easily become morbid by introspection, so that their sense of moral values is impaired and their sympathies with their fellows are restricted. They suffer from scrupulosity, or are injured by

misdirected discipline, or confirmed by partial self-knowledge in their self-conceit, which is sometimes more dangerous than entire self-ignorance.

Men can never know themselves until they know something of their fellow-men. He that is always at home in his own heart, and never goes abroad, can have no true conception of the possibilities of human life, its difficulties and perils, or its infinite complexity. All knowledge for us must be relative. It is not otherwise in self-knowledge, and if we would know ourselves we must meet the world's demands and dangers, and share the stress and struggle of personality with personality in the conflict which is the condition of human progress. Self is never known except by the apprehension of what is not self. An infant is unaware of the reality of his own existence, he cannot recognize his separate life until he finds himself opposed by external things which control his action and extort their penalty if he disregards them. And it is not until he recognizes wills other than his own that he makes the discovery of his own existence as a person, and begins to frame such sentences as "I will," or "I will not," "I ought," or "I ought not." As life develops he comes to self-knowledge through experience in his dealings with others.

But even this is not sufficient for the full attainment of self-knowledge. A man cannot know himself until he sees clearly what he ought to be, what he might be, in the revelation of the ideal of personality. This is but another way of saying that we cannot really know ourselves until we know God. Christianity beyond all other faiths makes this plain. It declares that in the person of Christ God is made known to men, and bids us think of the Almighty in the terms of that life which is described in the Gospels. Its great Central Figure reveals not only the Divine Will, but the Divine character. But there is something else to be known through Him. It is to be observed that as soon as men learned the secret of Christ they learned the secret of themselves. The perfection of His character manifested the quality of their own. He showed them what they might be, and in that revelation they attained self-knowledge. It made them His true disciples or drove them to that self-condemnation which is a man's worst doom.

VI

OPPORTUNITY

THE history of the word opportunity and its varied meanings show that we must be careful how we use it. This, perhaps, becomes most apparent in our description of the opportunist, the man who waits on opportunity. It may describe one who withholds his hand until the right time for action, watching the forces which control men, content to exercise patience, and yet ready to act at once with decision when the occasion demands it. A wise statesman in this sense of the term must be an opportunist. He knows the truth of Bishop Stubbs's declaration that in national history opportunity is as powerful as purpose.

It is significant, however, that men most frequently call him an opportunist who is content to abandon principles for the sake of advantage, disregarding moral sanctions or prohibitions when they interfere with his own designs. He disposes of his conscience, it may be, in the interests of his party or for personal gain. He

takes short views of life and becomes the creature of circumstance. Opportunity is for him the chance of gaining some coveted prize, not the fit occasion of faithful service. He deals violently with life's claims, and would bend them to his own will. He is without the true tact of life which comes from sympathy with one's fellows, an appreciation of their needs and sorrows, with unshaken fidelity to the demands of truth and charity.

We frequently hear the demand for equality of opportunity. Opportunity, we ask, for what? Before we can find a right answer to this question we must clear our minds of cant. Equality of opportunity must mean freedom to use the true occasion and the right means of self-development in order to ensure the most effective service of the individual to the general well-being. It must be confessed that this equality is never apparent in life as we know it. The conditions of a man's birth, his education, his social environment, obviously affect his powers. There can be no equality here even in the most favoured conditions of civil polity. But this is not the whole of the matter. It is true that opportunity is often offered to us without our seeking it, and to some it is presented more frequently than to others. But the highest and largest opportunities are made by the man himself.

We are not here and now concerned with this question in its economic or political aspects. Our intention is to point out its place in morals and religion. In these spheres, no less than in others, many people bewail their lack of opportunity, urging that heredity, combined with present circumstance, gives them no hope of attaining a high moral standard, no means of religious development, and no true satisfactions of spiritual desires. We may suggest for the self-questioning of those who indulge in such complaints that they, perhaps, have not made the best of such opportunities as have been given to them. Are they at this moment ready to accept the challenge of new opportunity if it should present itself to them? Are they sure that it is not now before them if only by the lessons of the past they had acquired wisdom to see it?

Opportunity is neither chance nor accident. No one who believes in a Divine Providence will assent to the statement in "Antigone":

'Tis Fortune's chance
That raiseth up, and Fortune bringeth low,
The man who lives in good or evil plight!

Nor, on the other hand, will anyone in these days plead the harsh and irreversible decrees of

Eternal Power with its doom of misery on men independently of their will. Freedom is ours, freedom to respond to the challenge of opportunity. We are at liberty to accept or reject it : or we may miss it in sheer listlessness, allowing it to pass unacknowledged and unrecognized. More men fail in life through lack of purpose than lack of opportunity. It comes to many who mistake it as a portent or a danger, because they are unwilling to take occasion by the hand and breast the blows of circumstance. Others are absorbed in business or pleasure, and in their blundering hurry in the rush and noise of the world pass opportunity unheeded, though it pleads again and again, and would lead them to new revelations of truth, new forms of higher service, new attainments of character.

In the things of the Spirit equality of opportunity is founded on loyalty to the one God and Father of all. We are all equally free to serve Him, and His service is perfect freedom, *cui servire regnare est*. But for this we need the settled purpose which keeps a man true to the ideal, and makes him aware of all that can rightly be used as opportunity for attaining it for himself and for others. To the true artisans of the Spirit, life here and now is one great opportunity, to be seized and used in the conflict of purpose

and circumstance in the attainment of an ever larger life :

One great aim, like a guiding star above,
Which tasked strength, wisdom, stateliness, to lift
Their manhood to the height that takes the prize.

VII

CIRCUMSTANCE

CHRISTIANITY deals with men as it finds them. It has no illusions about their powers and character, and it knows the stress of the circumstances in which they live. It is in the best sense of the word a practical religion, dealing with the ordinary man, if any man is ordinary, in commonplace surroundings. Sometimes it calls him to renounce his possessions or to dedicate his life to a special task demanding complete self-sacrifice, but that does not happen for most men. Christianity insists that they must remain in the world and face the conditions it imposes on them.

But if the circumstances of life for the Christian remain unaltered, they acquire a new significance. If they are not to be renounced, that is because they are to be made ministrant to a higher purpose. They may set the conditions of life, but they are no longer its controlling influence. They may decree the nature of the man's tasks, restricting his liberty of choice and his oppor-

tunities of self-development, but they do not rule him. He rules them. Neither money nor what it stands for, nor the prizes of the world's success, control his ambitions. They are not the inspiration of his work or the goal of his efforts. They are to be valued not for themselves, but only as they can be employed in the development of character and in furtherance of the Divine kingdom.

The desire to be master of our circumstances is general, and men seek this lordship in more ways than one. Many hope for their freedom by cultivating the faculties of the mind or developing their æsthetic powers. Culture in its widest and highest sense enables them to rise above the restrictions of circumstance to find their satisfactions in philosophy, art, or literature. The man who learns to be at home with the great writers and artists finds himself carried far beyond the restrictions of the world's circumstances to a kingdom of the mind where all things temporal pass into nothingness. Such a man is no longer a city clerk, or a harassed professional man, or an anxious politician, but a citizen of an empire where each member enjoys a perfect and satisfying freedom from the conditions in which otherwise his life is too often cribbed, cabined, and confined.

Such refuge, however, from the irksome conditions of life is not so much secured by victory over circumstance as by flight from its power. In thought and feeling men escape from the claims, the distractions, the tasks of the world, but their liberty is only temporary. They must sooner or later come back to earth again to find that they are not, after all, masters in the world of commonplace work. At best they are servants who are allowed an occasional holiday. For them circumstance is still the imposition of a tedious drudgery, to which they must comply in the sheer necessity of sustenance or the preservation of their reputation in the world. They cannot claim to be rulers of circumstance.

The influence of the power of environment is almost impossible to exaggerate. [The social reformer who would secure better conditions as a preliminary to a higher morality has ample justification for his demands. Experience shows that improved housing with adequate wages for work done in healthy surroundings has no small influence on the moral and intellectual standards of the community. And yet we see that the best conditions cannot secure the highest satisfactions. Something else is necessary. It is the claim of religion, and supremely of Christianity, that the true use of the world and all that makes up

S13

circumstance, is found when it is made the instrument of the Spirit and employed in the service of a higher power than itself in the extension of the kingdom of righteousness and truth. Only in this way do men rise superior to their circumstances, and become no longer the slaves but the masters of the conditions in which they live. They may not be able to alter them, but they can employ them according to their own purpose. It is in a man's use of circumstance that we test the worth of character. The same conditions have quite different results in life. One man may employ them to the development of the highest qualities, while another will make them little else than the instruments of his own degradation.

Circumstances can never be offered as an explanation of virtue or be pleaded as an excuse for vice. There is something in a man which imposes upon him the sense of responsibility. He knows that at the last he submits to the claims of the world, its enticements, its prizes, its glamour, by an act of his own will. Heredity and environment may make his battle all the harder, but he knows that they cannot absolve him from responsibility. He is still lord of his fate and master of the conditions in which he works it out. Let him call to mind those powers

of the Spirit which enlighten the understanding and strengthen purpose, relying on the realities of Divine grace, which gives men strength in times of struggle and heartens them in their failures and depression. Let him exchange bondage to circumstance, "that unspiritual god," for the service of Him who makes men masters of themselves and of the world in which they live.

VIII

HIDDEN RESOURCES

MARION CRAWFORD described certain people as having no indoors in their life. We may understand that he had in mind men and women who have no reserves of character. At a first meeting they impress strangers with their amiability and frankness. They may be attractive acquaintances; they are never real friends. Sometimes they show a certain brilliancy, but further acquaintance reveals no solid worth. They are like enterprising tradesmen who have all their best goods in the shop window, but only a meagre supply of goods are found behind the counter.

It might have been thought that in these days men could not be content with the surface things of life. Within the last decade we have passed through deep waters, and now find ourselves troubled by anxieties which must needs stir the minds and hold the hearts of thoughtful men, driving them to make a call on such moral resources as they possess. But it would appear many find nothing within themselves to which

they can retire for quiet recuperation. They have no reserve of strength, no shelter in the day of trouble, no refuge in the soul against the storms of the world raging round them. They can stand against no siege of passion, no stress of trial, no pressure of prejudice, no sudden emergence of unwelcome circumstance. The outer defences of their life fall at once, and leave them discomfited utterly. They cannot last out. There is no indoors in their life.

Such as these dread to be alone with themselves. That is the worst fortune that can come to them. They must go out and live in the company of others, as travellers who have no care but to mitigate the hardship of the way. For them thought is nothing until it is framed in speech, which is never more than trifling conversation. They mistake convention for truth, and life becomes a series of disconnected episodes, without meaning and without purpose. Seriousness is counted dulness. Conviction a restraint of licence, which they call liberty. Meditation is impossible.

What should be the palace of the mind is but a lumber-room of fancy, a shed in which lie heaped together muddled thoughts, and phrases battered by unreflecting use. They never store the fruits of study and reflection. If they read

they do not mark and learn and inwardly digest. A few pieces of small change take the place of the treasury of ideals tested by experience which keep a man steady in the time of sorrow and nourish him in the day of scarcity. They cannot retire within. Their minds have no rooms in which they can live at peace, with the joy of present content and the confidence of further riches still to be attained.

The man with reserves of moral power knows how his soul is free to live in large places, furnished for use and beauty. He withdraws within himself, and in the further rooms of personality finds friends of wide sympathy and perfect knowledge. He loves to be alone, just because being alone he finds himself in the best company. In the inner recesses of his being there is a sanctuary in which the Divine Spirit dwells, affording him that communion with the infinite which is the grace of life, the fellowship of Truth, desire's perfect satisfaction, the calm strength of that peace which is never disturbed though storms may rage without. Such a man is no dreamer. He lives with realities. Goodness, truth, and beauty are known in their power, and he is strengthened by constant communion with them, so that when he goes forth to life's duties he acts with well-directed aim and the conquering energy of conviction.

There may be secret places in the hearts of men which are the torture-chambers of life, furnaces of remorse, charnel-houses of repudiated duty. For these to be indoors to oneself is to be haunted by the terrifying figures of evil memory. It were better to have an empty house than one filled with such tenants. Evil is never really at home in the hearts of men. It is an intrusion, and he who allows it entrance within himself can find no rest. But it is not enough to drive it out. In its stead place must be found for the grace of forgiveness and the inspiration of new ideals: A man must welcome repentance, duty, and truth, and let them so occupy his heart that there can be no place for anything unworthy.

IX

MORAL STANDARDS

MORAL distinctions remain permanent and inviolable, though often enough we are unable to recognize them. Right and wrong are separate and opposite to each other. We may not be able to tell why or how this is good and that is evil : we may even mistake the one for the other. But in the real tests of life sooner or later they stand in opposition and each reveals its true character.

It must be confessed that our chief difficulty in forming sound moral judgments lies with ourselves. We are puzzled to discern between good and evil because our conscience is asleep, or perverted by self-interest, passion, or want of training. Or we lack moral seriousness with the firm will to follow the highest revealed to us. For moral faculties, like physical powers, lose their force by lack of exercise. He that will not, sooner or later cannot see that which is good and follow after it. We may add that men may be quick to see what is true and right in certain

departments of life, and follow it with ready self-sacrifice, while their moral perceptions seem to be smitten with a strange obtuseness in other directions. This is the secret of many a moral tragedy which seems unaccountable to a man's most intimate friends, and strangest of all to the man himself. He may be honourable in business, generous in his social life, and yet all the while be the victim of base passion to the perversion of his whole character. Where desire claims him he knows no law, but heedlessly obeys the clamour of his lusts to the wreck of his life.

Few men have a full-orbed moral vision, and not many act worthily of all that they know to be true and good and beautiful. It is our wisdom to recognize these facts, which cause so much confusion in moral judgments. If once we are aware of them as part of our own experience we shall endeavour to train our moral perceptions and discipline our wills to more loyal effort to follow the highest revealed to us. Good conduct is not secured when we have attained high ethical ideals. If that were so, moralists would always be virtuous and knowledge would be a synonym for righteousness. And yet the importance of true moral standards is obvious. Though we may not claim that with them we cannot but succeed, we must fail without them. When once they are

clearly apprehended they set the level of our efforts, they challenge our wills, and not seldom they attract us by their beauty, enticing us by the promise of fidelity's reward. But they can do little more.

This, we say, is an ethical rather than a religious age. Many acknowledge the duty of righteousness who doubt, if they do not deny, the reality and claims of a supernatural life. For them religion is at best based on a hypothesis. But they do not deny the reality of moral distinctions and our duty to rule our lives by the light they offer. They acknowledge that we must, if we would carry ourselves worthily, follow the highest, the truest, the best we know. But is it not a fact that those who are most faithful in this high enterprise are most conscious of their failure in it? These are the men who have tasted the worst bitterness of defeat. The very height of their ideals measures the depths of their abasement. Here, we may venture to think, is the secret of the widespread moral pessimism which may be detected in the lives of many of the best men and women of our time. They despair because of the tragic dissonance between their ideals and their experience.

Pessimism has been evident wherever ethics and religion have been divorced from each other. The moralists of ancient Greece and Rome show

this in common with their modern representatives. But may it not be urged that with religion they might have been no more fortunate and may, indeed, have been more distressed? That has been asserted often enough. And when an appeal is made to Christianity Nietzsche is not the only writer who has denounced religion as but adding to man's weakness the bane of servile fear. Are our moral standards made easier of attainment if we add to them such injunctions as, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it : and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake shall find it " ?

But the fact is that Christian ethics never end with themselves. The Evangelicals of the last generations often referred in condemnation to what they called "mere morality." There is much reason for our refusal to endorse their judgments in their use of this phrase, but it may serve to remind us that the moral ideal in Christianity is always identified with a Person whose commands it expresses, and that He never calls men to a duty without encouraging those who accept it by the inspiration of His own example and by the power of His own life. In His light men see clearly the infinite distance between good and evil, truth and falsehood.

But the light is also the life of men. Christianity raises our moral standards, while it offers to all who accept them the power to attain the splendour of humanity's ideal. No other religion makes such a claim. It is a claim to be tested in experience before its validity can be either rejected or endorsed.

X

(LIFE'S PURPOSE

MEN may be divided into two classes—those who endeavour to follow a plan of what they would make of their lives, and those who let events shape them and their fortunes. The former know what they wish to attain and make it the constraining force of their conduct, the source of their motives and desires. The latter wait on circumstance and accept, though seldom without bitter protest, what it offers them.

The moral standard of the first class is not necessarily superior to that of the second. A strong-willed, purposeful man may be bent on securing his own advantage to his neighbours' harm; and the man who waits on events may take pleasure in helping others and sharing with them any advantage that may come to himself. But the moral possibilities of life for him are but meagre, and the chances are that he will render no real service to his fellows. While the purposeful man may do much harm, he may become the agent of almost infinite good. No purpose

can be worthy which is not controlled by an ideal ; but because the truest ideal can never be completely attained, he who would strive after the highest must know that every approach to it lifts its goal farther beyond his grasp. His success marks his failure. His recognition of failure is the measure of his success. Now and again we hear of men who in mature life have realized the dreams of their youth ; but they are comparatively few, and the best among them confess that attainment has not satisfied their desires. Sms A true man always sees more than he can attain, for his ideal is greater than himself. But his efforts do not on that account slacken. The true measure of a noble life is found in the increasing clearness of its vision of the ideal, towards which it strives with ever-waxing ardour.

The ideal is more than a matter of taste created by a man's own imagination or desire. It was not created by him ; it comes from outside, it has a supernatural element. Herein lie its reality, its strength, its power to evoke devoted effort, and its permanence. But though the man of true purpose has "hitched his wagon to a star," he finds the light of his ideal in his own heart. Far above him, it is still very near. It is there in the secret recesses of his being. Though he cannot completely grasp its meaning

or attain its full contents, it is his. The set purpose of effort in following the vision has its own reward. It provides

One great aim, like a guiding-star above,
Which tasked strength, wisdom, stateliness, to lift
Their manhood to the height that takes the prize.

This steadfastness to a true purpose brings its own revelation of life's worth. If it is declared that truth and honour are higher gifts than life, we may answer that they are the constant elements of all true life. He who put the searching question: "What will a man give in exchange for his life?" to those who would claim discipleship to Him, showed that man's life is divine as well as human—all the more human because it is endowed with the grace of supernatural power. Those who have learnt to reckon life by the Master's standard know its true worth, but when once they have learnt to value it as He values it, they find while it increases infinitely in its powers its purpose is attained in uttermost self-sacrifice. The more a man ventures in the treasure of life, the more opportunities he finds for spending it.¹

We make a great blunder when we confine life's purpose to contentment in possessions or desires, satisfaction. This is to make existence

a dull task, allowing us nothing more than either the sombre caution of Butler or the self-regarding morality of Paley. Life has its own justification in its search for more life—a higher life—a life of continually developing service, affection, aspiration, and worship. All that happens in the course of our time here of sorrow, pain, disappointment and disillusion, of hope, joy, and love, proves by the convincing argument of experience that we are intended to go forward in the pursuit of an ideal by which we secure an ever expanding power of life. It is not the attainment of purpose that marks success. The effort to attain brings its own satisfaction. Here a splendid failure often confers the higher reward.

Self-interest leads to self-destruction. The success of self-satisfaction is confusion, for it is the loss of life. It is true that a man has his duty to himself. He must be self-regarding, but that is far from being selfish. He must be self-regarding, for he has himself to train, to educate, to inspire, or rather he must use the means provided for him to secure his training, education, and inspiration. His care for himself is not to secure possessions for his pleasure or to attain power for his own satisfaction, but to respond with ever greater readiness to the

bidding of the ideal in service to God and his fellow-men. The truth becomes manifest: "Whosoever shall seek to gain his life shall lose it: but whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it."

XI

THE SECRET OF PERSONALITY

OUR response to conscious personal influence is at best intermittent. Men may feel its force in some eloquent appeal in which an orator awakens their dormant desires and arouses them to vigorous action. Noble deeds may constrain us, not only to admiration, but to imitation.

When an appeal to virtue is made by those whose characters do not support it, failure is certain, for we all feel the ineffectiveness of counsels when they are unaccompanied by conduct correspondent to their appeal. The most eloquent plea for righteousness made by a man of known vicious life serves rather to expose his own unworthiness than to commend the virtue he would have others practise. Even while he speaks, his words die on his lips. What he is thunders so loud that men do not hear what he says. Moral influence cannot exist except when expressed in life. It is true that men have been awakened from apathy or evil courses by impersonal appeals

The Secret of Personality 61

and sometimes by the exhortations of unworthy advocates, but when this has happened they have responded to the power of realities which lie beyond our control and come from the Author of all goodness.

If we reflect on the influences which most powerfully affect men, we find that they are exerted unconsciously by those whose lives silently manifest what words cannot fashion. A mother's self-denying love has its own eloquence, and has held men true and pure when no expressed appeal to honour could avail and no consideration of self-interest had any power. A wife's devotion may control a man she is only anxious to serve, yielding an influence, won by her fidelity. A child's trust commands even when it seems only to appeal for protection. A good man has this power of moral influence by right of his own pure manhood. Unconsciously he rules men's hearts. It may be that like Erskine of Linlathen his looks are better than a thousand homilies, or like F. D. Maurice the revelation of truth seems embodied in a gesture. The most potent moral influences in the world are wielded by those who never recognize their royal power. Their unconscious sovereignty raises no barriers or protests within us. Their unspoken commands make obedience a pleasure.

They are kings among their fellows, reigning by divine right and human homage.

The worth of personality is indicated by this unconscious moral influence. A man may have a commanding intellect, fine artistic gifts of expression, large powers of social influence, but if he is without sincerity and high ideals he will count for nothing that is good in the lives of others. He may control public policy, but no one will render him the homage of true reverence ; he may make men prosperous, but no one will be a whit the happier or better on his account. And if all the good in the world has its root in the moral influence of personality, we must also confess that the evil in men's lives may be traced to the same source.

When we reflect on the secret of personality and its strange power of moral influence, we cannot but be conscious that our supreme duty is to discipline ourselves in fidelity to truth, purity, and justice. We each exercise an influence for good or evil, and, recognizing this sobering fact, must take ourselves in hand, not only watching what we say or do, but what we are, or, rather, what we are becoming. In the long run our worth is measured by this moral influence. This is a motive for righteousness which we cannot afford to neglect. He whose influence all men

The Secret of Personality 63

acknowledge to be the most potent in history did not hesitate to declare that He consecrated Himself to the Divine Will for the sake of His fellow-men. The secret of His supreme moral influence is found in this fact.

XII

THE (DIGNITY OF) WORK

FROM every quarter the demand comes for a greater volume and higher efficiency of work. Whatever may be his kind of labour the worker is recognized as the high priest of our economic salvation. Everyone recognizes this fact. But all over the world to-day, so it is reported, men are refusing to put forth the full vigour of their efforts. While the workers demand a higher return for what they do they seem careless to increase their output.

It is unnecessary here and now to inquire into the economic and political causes of this reported indisposition to work. But it may be an advantage to point out the moral gain both for the individual and community in all honest and industrious labour. The discredit which in the past has been attached to manual work has historical causes which sufficiently explain it. Slavery put all work under a ban of degradation, and it was natural in view of the conditions of ancient Greece that even Aristotle

should extend his contempt to the freed man who lived by the work of his own hands. Toil marked and distorted the body; its daily pay was the measure of its abasement; exhausting effort and absorption in the details of mechanical construction were held to degrade man's spirit as well as his body.

Christianity gave no countenance to this conception of manual labour. The Jews had held it to be honourable, insisting that all those who claimed to be their teachers should be able if necessity arose to earn their bread by their own handicraft. But those who followed the Carpenter of Nazareth and the fishermen of Galilee found a new motive in work which made it a sacred ministry to God and their fellow-men, and an appointed means of grace for their own moral development. "Men do work, but work makes men." The artisan is not simply engaged in labour, or the mechanic in his handicraft; they are shaping their own characters. The bootmaker is not merely making a pair of shoes; he is making his own soul. The builder is not merely erecting a house; he is raising a temple in which he with those who make their home in it may worship the Lord of all.

Work honestly done is man's co-operation with the Divine Worker. It is our response to

His invitation to join with Him to make the world serve the welfare and happiness of mankind. There is no way to gain the true wealth of life except by hard work ; but it must be work at its best, ungrudging and purposeful. It is true that many of us may find ourselves engaged in work for which we have little liking and perhaps no great aptitude. The choice of occupation was never ours. It was settled for us by others, or by circumstances which we could not control. But the man who believes in Providence will not succumb to listlessness or disabling discontent on that account. Here are the conditions allotted to him, and he must play the man in them. At least they give him his opportunity of doing something in the world, to be done by him and by no other in co-operation with the Divine activity which persists throughout the ages in its increasing and beneficial activity to the complete attainment of its purpose.

Nothing that God does for men is completed without their loyal co-operative effort. Nothing grows to its fullest strength unless man helps it by his work. The Divine gift of the seed's life could not develop to its fruit but for man's skilful husbandry. By work he becomes a minister of life first to the grain and through

it to his fellow-men, enabling them in their turn to serve one another in one vast fellowship of work's service in the Kingdom of God. Heaven is to be made out of earth, and the means by which this glory is attained is the wonderful magic of honest toil.

Happy, indeed, is the man who has found his work, and does it with his whole heart. In it he reaches his fullest dignity and has the guarantee of an abiding contentment. If it is true that numbers of our artisans are refusing to give their best efforts in work, restricting their output for greater gain, we cannot doubt that here we have one root cause of the present industrial discontent. When work is done with reluctance, in measured miserliness of that which is the source of wealth, there is sourness of spirit and the murmuring of revolution. If we need more production in work to place our social system on more secure foundations, we as truly need it for the moral well-being of the workers themselves. Work is necessary for true fellowship. There are differences of operations in the body politic, but all must work if it is to be sound, healthy, and vigorous. Labour is the service each may offer to all, being at once giver and receiver in a reciprocal obligation of true brotherhood.

Ruskin insisted that work must be honest, useful, and cheerful. It must be all this and more. It must secure the honourable independence of the worker. In what does this consist? It is found in security against degrading poverty, provision for illness and old age, opportunity for leisure and for pleasure, full experience of the grace of family life, with liberty for the fullest exercise of the intellectual, artistic, and spiritual powers of our manhood. Work is the appointed means by which these things are gained. That is its highest ministry. The worker is the royal man, with the dignity which comes from the consciousness of service done to God and man. In the new heaven and the new earth of which he is a pioneer he will take his place among the citizens of the kingdom of God.

XIII

DIFFICULTIES

ART, in proportion to its perfection, has the mark of ease of attainment. Its work, we think, could not be anything but what we find it to be. Everything is in its place, by a natural fitness expressing a confidence of expression as if the result were inevitable. We easily forget the severe toil of which it is the fruit, the discipline of wayward will, the discomfiture of frequent failure, the struggle with intractable material which have produced so marvellous a sense of self-confident success. But it is clear that every step towards artistic perfection is a test of endurance against difficulty.

When we turn to the highest of all arts, the creation of a true character, the same experience of struggle issuing in sure attainment is apparent to the sympathetic onlooker. We attribute moral excellence only where there is an absence of fear, and no dread of failure. Goodness, at its highest, carries itself easily. It could not be otherwise than it is. If it betrays the least doubt of itself, the shadow of a fear for its own safety, we question

its reality or its permanence. And yet it is the result of constant struggle, in which many failures have been known. Its very strength has been won in conflict against unruly passions and opposing motives and desires. Its beauty is the measure of its constant discipline. Its freedom has been won in constant service.

Moral earnestness is necessary for a virtuous life, and for this there must be a clear distinction between truth and falsehood, good and evil, and persistence in the struggle in which a man is called to engage if he would attain the highest that is revealed to him. To blur moral distinctions is either to be crippled by inconstancy or to be at ease at the expense of fidelity. It is not merely fear that undoes man: shirking of effort may lead to a like disastrous result. He who would attain freedom in the art of true living must be so enthusiastic in his purpose that difficulties become but new occasions of requickened energy, driving him forward, though it be with staggering feet and bowed head, to continue in the battle. The sense of weariness and strain may well-nigh overcome the man, but he is aware of an inner compensation, a purified vision of that to which he aspires, a consciousness of an increasing satisfaction of attainment, an unwavering conviction of final victory.

The struggle is just as real to secure what we may call the simplest virtues as in the pursuit of the highest attainments of character. R. L. Stevenson more than once pointed out that we all would claim to be honest. We speak as if we find honesty "as easy as Blind Man's Buff." But does not experience show how its practice requires vigilance and self-repression, that many subtle temptations must be met with fixed resolution before we can claim it? But there are virtues which all recognize as specially difficult to acquire, and sometimes we are inclined to think them impossible for us. Forgiveness of injuries is never easy, but the freedom of moral excellence cannot be ours until we have learned that most gracious art by which, in absolving others, we free ourselves from the subtlest yet most cruel bonds of hatred or contempt.

Many difficulties, and these perhaps the most constant and most irksome, come from the discordances and oppositions within ourselves. This has been the battle-ground of the saints long before St Paul gave it so graphic and poignant expression in his cry :

The good which I would I do not ; but the evil which I would not, that I practise. . . . For I delight in the law of God after the inward man ; but I see a different law in my members warring against the law of my mind.

The struggle for virtue is fiercest in the citadel of a man's own soul. Defeat or victory is decided in the fortunes of the battle.

The Stoic's Steep Hill of Virtue, like the Hill Difficulty of Bunyan's allegory, affords no smooth travelling, but there is no other way to the goal. The faithless or insincere may seek to march round it, but it is only to find themselves held in the bog of their own sloth or straying after the uncertain lights of public opinion or personal advantage. We need not here and now think of the difficulties of faith, though they are real enough. Of these let it be sufficient to say that we may easily exaggerate them while we ignore the equal perplexities of unfaith. We are rather thinking of the difficulties which beset a man who would attain the virtues and discharge the duties all men recognize as part of any worthy life. We may not shirk them without loss. We must bend our wills of set purpose to self-discipline, walking warily in the way—watchful, vigilant, and determined.

But these difficulties, if bravely met, cease to be hindrances to virtue, to become the conditions by which moral progress is attained, the means by which men renew their moral strength, the occasions of the purest joys which the heart can know. Surmounted they produce

new capacities for higher virtue, larger powers of joyous confidence. Dangers bravely faced are occasions of new energy for more arduous adventure. Only in this way can a man maintain the ardours of the spirit, keep his moral vision keen, and maintain his love for the ideal. Guarding himself against the seductions of his own passions and the glitter of this world's baubles, he endures, till at last, at ease with himself and loyal to the ideal, he enjoys that freedom which is perfect liberty.

XIV

CONSCIOUS FAILURE

PERFECTION is not in our power, yet we may aspire to nothing short of it. [“We needs must love the highest when we see it.” Some religions are designed to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the average man, but sooner or later they lose their power, and their creed becomes outworn. In their compliance with such a faith its professors sink into apathy. A living religion must take men beyond their natural powers and have at its heart the attainment of perfection.

Art at its best is a conscious struggle after an ideal. Directly it becomes satisfied with convention it becomes degraded. It lives and develops by its faithfulness to the vision of perfection. Men may realize that their finest efforts must needs fall short of their purpose, but the attempt to reach it has its own satisfactions, while the consciousness of failure is but the call for further endeavour. Thus they learn the meaning of the much-abused phrase, “Art

for art's sake." They are satisfied with no lower reward, and they know it were better to fail in the pursuit of the highest than to succeed in a lower aim.] That would not only mean the forfeit of self-respect, it would also darken or distort the vision of the ideal in the mists of passion or the glare of worldly gain.

In a comparative study of religion we become conscious that] Christianity is more insistent than any other faith on the fact that men must strive after perfection. It scorns compromise with men's poor powers, but bids them remember the Divine perfection and seek to attain it in themselves. This is the cause of its insistence on the Perfect Manhood of Christ, and our duty to make Him the pattern of our lives. It might have been supposed that confronted by this ideal men would recognize the impossibility of attaining it, and sink into sheer hopelessness. Certainly they are not spared the sense of failure. Indeed, this is most apparent in those who strive most earnestly to achieve success. Hence comes that note of penitence in the lives of the saints, so incomprehensible to others, and yet so inevitable in men who see and love the ideal and strive to attain it. Hence comes the startling poignancy of the true Christian's confession of sin. He knows what he is called to be, what he

might be, and, comparing it with what he is, bewails his failure.]

[But in this consciousness of so great a disparity between attainment and ideal there is the secret of an ever greater successor. It braces a man to a more strenuous self-discipline, teaches him a wiser caution, incites him to new efforts to that ideal which becomes all the clearer and more attractive even when it seems most beyond his range. He ^{feels} knows that as long as life lasts he must fall short of his aims, and yet there abides in the depths of his soul the vision he cannot forsake, which attracts, comforts, and strengthens even when it condemns. One thing he may not do. He may not be content with anything less than the ideal.]

This confident pursuit of what cannot be completely grasped is a paradox of the Christian life which can never be understood except by those who find its interpretation in experience. To others it may be a matter of wonder or contempt, but to those who share it all is plain. Their fidelity is no matter of temperament, or training, or imagination. The ideal which reveals their poverty of achievement and the frailty of their powers offers them continued strength, the strength of that life which is in itself, to continue faithful in their high enterprise. Thus it comes

about that the consciousness of failure becomes the condition of progress ; the contrast between what they are and what they might be is only a proof that they made forward with a good courage.

Here we come upon a second characteristic of Christianity. Not ~~only does it~~ offer us a perfect example as the standard of human life ; it offers those who would try to attain it, the true artists of the Spirit, continued help in their efforts. In theological language this is known as grace, which is a supernatural life operative in men. To each aspirant after the ideal this power is offered. In the time of his greatest need he hears the assurance : *Sufficit tibi gratia mea : nam virtus in infirmitate perficitur*. Man is not alone in his struggle after perfection. God is with him and in him and he is with God and with all those who in the mutual participation of the Divine life are in fellowship with each other in the Spirit-bearing body which is the Church.

The dual experience of conscious failure and progress to perfection cannot, of course, come to its full correlation here and now. To expect this would be to misconceive the nature of the ideal, and the nature of man to whom it is presented. The path of life goes on above the

horizon of this world. In the clearer atmosphere of that which lies beyond, the ideal acquires a higher reality, and man's powers are strengthened and developed as they still go forward to attain it. Life is as long as the art of true living, for at the last they are expressed in equal terms. All that is true and beautiful here and now will be seen and attained in higher truth and greater beauty hereafter. The failure which marks human life at its best is the guarantee of a continued progress when man leaves the infant class-rooms of time for the spacious mansions of the Eternal Presence.

CONDUCT

XV

HONESTY

THOUGH we speak of common honesty, as we do of common sense, we find neither is too prevalent. Perhaps they are called common because they are demanded from everybody or are within the power of all men to attain. But though we all claim the common right of honest dealing from our fellows, the rarity of perfect honesty is the constant lament of moralists and the cause of humiliation to many a self-respecting man.

Honesty comes from *honestas*, which meant honourable or bringing honour. In English it stood for chastity in women and what was seemly in men. It stands for uprightness, truthfulness, integrity, the law of all true men's dealings with each other. Honesty is necessary for social well-being. It is a part of justice. Men may not without cause emphasize its rarity, but it certainly must in its measure be maintained in any settled community.

Honesty is not demanded only in our dealings

with each other. A man must be honest with himself, lest he become both the cheater and the cheated, the deceiver and deceived, and thus be held in a circle of moral disaster. We are all conscious, or shall we say semi-conscious, of the existence of motives, desires, fears, ambitions within ourselves which we rarely stay to examine. We habitually ignore them, till some occasion arises when they become so vivid, urgent, powerful that they force themselves on our attention. We feel that there are uncomfortable elements in our life. Honesty compels us to reckon with their insistent challenge. We can have no doubt of their importance. We know that they make or mar life, and it is wisdom to deal with them honestly, but we shirk the ordeal as painful and humiliating. Moral cowardice makes us dishonest in heart.

Half the dishonesty of men in their dealings with others would vanish in a moment if they would but be honest with themselves. Let a man face the truth about himself and he will sooner or later refuse to deceive his neighbours. Self-delusion is the mother of that deceit which a man practises on others, and a man must first betray his own honour before he can treat another dishonourably. And it is not enough that we should recognize the hidden sources of character

within ourselves ; we should be honest enough to give them their right names. There is a strange disparity in the verdicts we pass on ourselves and on others for offences which an impartial judge would reprobate equally. What we should call base deceit in another is excused altogether in ourselves ; what we hold to be sharp practice in a rival we like to think commendable alertness in ourselves.

Are the difficulties of honesty increased by the dishonesty of others ? To some extent, perhaps ; but dishonesty is as common and more disastrous where this motive can have no force. Where is insincerity, which is dishonesty of heart, so prevalent as in the profession of religion ? Here we have to do with One who is eternal Righteousness. Self-protection against Him is meaningless ; there can be no gain in dishonest traffic with the Most High. How is it, then, that honesty in religious profession seems so difficult ? The trouble is with ourselves. The worst foes are those within a man's own household—sloth, pride, passion, and selfishness. These seduce the man and rob him of honesty in religion.

He who would be honest in his faith must needs give his mind to it and come to a decision about it. Will he accept it or reject it ? Honesty

demands a frank answer. It is not, to begin with, a question of accepting this formula of faith or that exposition of its contents, but, accepting something as the basis of faith, will he be true to the claims it makes and the duties it imposes? If he comes to the conclusion that religion is naught, will he still be honest with himself and live his life frankly on that basis of negation? Honesty is a stern master. Yet it is the most generous of friends to those who will follow its behests.

For those who accept Christianity in any real sense honesty demands that they should test their faith and give token of their sincerity by their conduct. Doing this they will gain a clearer apprehension of the truth, the beauty, and the power of the religion they profess. We may not be sure of our orthodoxy, but we ought to be sure of our honesty, and being sure of that we shall certainly learn more and more of the faith. The just man, the honest man, understands most clearly the reality of the moral government of the world, and grasps most certainly the issues of that spiritual life by which he walks in the liberty of the children of God. Let a man honestly live according to the truth he acknowledges and walk in the light given to him and he will surely gain a larger

knowledge and gain a clearer light, living with the increasing confidence of those who may be mistaken but can never be dishonoured, for the honest and good heart is theirs to the end.

XVI

DUTY

WE seldom nowadays hear the word duty. It is an unpopular term. This is not because of any philosophic objection like that of Bentham's, who declared that for him the very word duty had in it something disagreeable and repulsive, conflicting as it did with his theory that in morals happiness is the highest end of life. This "harsh and hateful word duty, duty, duty," is shunned to-day. It stands for a view of life which runs counter to popular sentiment and aims.

Yet there was a time when duty was a favourite word with Englishmen. Historians have noticed its frequent occurrence in the dispatches of our most famous generals. These heroes asked for no higher satisfaction than the discharge of their duty. Why, then, should it now be so seldom urged as a motive of conduct? The modern tendency to claim the fullest liberty of self-expression, and the prevalent impatience of all external control, accounts for it in part.

The Spirit of the Age is not only unfavourable to compliance with any external authority, it has come to shirk every form of self-discipline. No wonder duty, with its uncompromising standards and its unflinching commands, is unwelcomed.

But duty is something more than the decree of an external law. Moral law, the categorical imperative of duty, is no mere compulsion from outside. It is far from being mere restraint, an impersonal rule restricting freedom and limiting self-development. Duty, no doubt, points to that which is above us ; something which we do not control, but which controls us, something which men at times find menacing and terrible. But to those who respond to its command it does but express the soul's inner desire and thus confers a gracious freedom.

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God,
O Duty ! if that name thou love,
Who art a light to guide, a rod
To check the erring, and reprove ;
Thou, who art victory and law
When empty terrors overawe,
From vain temptations dost set free ;
And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity.

We speak of duty to ourselves, to our neighbours, and to God, and this threefold division has its justification. It is not for nothing that a man who gives himself without restraint to the

satisfactions of passing desire is called his own worst enemy. He has forfeited his liberty to licence. He has failed in duty. For life has a purpose, with tasks assigned to it, with a soul to discipline, a character to make. If this work is neglected a man betrays himself, and becomes the victim of his own treachery. But that is not all. His failure is an offence against his fellows. For they, too, have rights over his actions, claims on his loyalty and service. It is not enough that we should do no harm to others, we must give them what is their due, that is, what is our duty. This does not depend on our own pleasure, nor, may we add, on theirs. Duty has higher sanctions.

For the Christian moralist duty cannot be separated from the Divine Source of all law, and when Wordsworth traced it to the Voice of God he would remind us of this fact. For duty is the law of a personal will, righteous, true, and all-loving. Duty for duty's sake is but a phrase. There is a higher motive. Duty demands more than obedience in word and deed. It enters into the depths of a man's thought, desires, hopes, and aspirations, and calls for the homage of his whole manhood. He who would do his duty finds it the expression of Divine law, and in obedience knows it to be service not only to

himself and to his neighbours, but to Him who is the source and end of all true life.

To-day we need, perhaps, more than ever a greater loyalty to duty. Democracy has this lesson to learn, and its future depends on its readiness to accept it. When men claim their rights they must beware lest they ignore their duties. The freedom democracy desires can be attained, preserved, and put to useful service only by the self-discipline which loyalty to duty implies. Without a sense of duty its power may become the instrument of lawlessness or an easy excuse for licence. Great opportunities are being offered to democracy, and we need not be surprised if sometimes it may forget its responsibilities in the new possibilities which are opening up before it. But nothing can absolve it from the claims of duty, and its measure of freedom will be controlled by its self-discipline.

For the Christian, duty comes less in the shape of prohibitions than in the form of positive commands. Its characteristic form is "Thou shalt" for the "Thou shalt not" of the ancient law. It teaches that virtue consists in the practice of good, not, as Greek, Roman, and Hebrew thought, in abstention from evil. It is less careful to destroy the unworthy in man and in the world than to evoke the good, and to

quicken into life all that makes for truth and fellowship. A man fulfils the claims of duty by confident endeavour to discharge the highest that has been revealed to him. Faithfulness to that ideal will help him in the conflicting claims of life and comfort him in its darkest days. For duty is a noble master, and when men tremble in the fear of conscience, duty's servants stand free and unafraid.

XVII

PRUDENCE

THERE are some virtues so easily perverted, either by exaggeration or neglect of their character and office, that it may become difficult to distinguish them from vices. Considerable reflection is sometimes required to apprehend their true nature, and to understand their place in life and conduct. When, however, this is done, their importance emerges, and they are seen to provide elements essential for true moral and spiritual development.

Prudence is a virtue of this sort. Some moralists have treated it as having no place in Christian ethics, alleging that it frequently hinders the special virtues men should most desire to attain. To these critics it stands for a cool self-regard, persistence in securing one's own welfare, careful restriction of a man's activities to what is safe, tempting him to a selfish withdrawal from the great ventures of faith. Others, refraining from so disparaging an estimate of prudence, still hesitate to regard it as a virtue on its own account. For them it is a useful ally in man's

attempt to secure something nobler and fairer than itself, and on that account, not for its own sake, to be cultivated. Meanwhile, they also see the danger of giving it a higher place than it can rightly claim.

Everyone knows that prudence was numbered among the cardinal virtues of Greek speculation. Plato and Aristotle agree in affirming its necessity for virtuous manhood. The Stoics also insisted on its importance, and often regarded it as the pivotal element in a worthy life. Christian moralists likewise have emphasized its value, yet all show caution in their estimate of its value. It is not to be denied that the ancient philosophers were quite aware of failures in moral excellence, due to a too great insistence on the exercise of prudence. Aristotle himself reminds us that he who shuns all dangers through excessive prudence, and never bears a bold front, becomes a coward; while he who never fears anything at all, and enters upon every venture, becomes foolhardy. Plainly, prudence must justify itself.

If we summarize the grounds of this criticism of prudence, we shall find that it is held to be too ready to advise what tends to self-interest, too prone to avoid difficult enterprises demanding self-sacrifice; that it abstains from evil because it fears to suffer, and does that which is

good, not for virtue's sake, but because it hopes to be recompensed. But does not this criticism misconceive the nature of true prudence? It is pre-eminently foresight, but foresight with long and wide views, surveying the whole field of life and regarding always its ultimate purpose. It misses its true office only when it contracts its vision and confines itself to a part of what life may have to offer or demand. When it is concerned only with wealth, or reputation, or happiness, and takes no thought of the higher facts of life, it is perverted, and failing in its office becomes no longer prudence, but selfishness, which is always evil in itself and the root of every evil that distorts and degrades humanity.

No doubt prudence is necessary for what the world calls success. Without it no man can take a high place among his fellows. Even moderate comfort in the world is impossible without it. Yet it is to be remarked that the man who, in the Gospels, is specially characterized as a fool was a man of evident prudence in the things of this life. His success was due to his energy and skill, and he showed his accustomed sagacity when he determined to build more commodious premises to store the produce of his land. Why, then, is he called a fool? Because his prudence in the things of this world was seen

to be foolishness in the things of the spiritual life, when, though his barns were filled to their roofs to supply his desires and ambitions, his body lay lifeless in his darkened house and his soul met the judgment of God. Prudent about what he could see and handle, he neglected all that gave life its spiritual purpose, and died in poverty of soul, as a fool dies in his folly.

A prudent man must, therefore, come to a true estimate of what he really is and what he ought to make of his life. If he fails in this, his prudence in any restricted sphere cannot save him from failure ; it may even be a cause of disaster. Prudence can reach its true activity only when we recognize those ultimate realities of the spirit with which human life is concerned. He who ignores them must be counted imprudent in the highest degree. Man has his part in a supernatural world for which he has special powers of apprehension and response. He is a citizen of an eternal kingdom which brings to him spiritual duties, claims, and privileges to be accepted as necessary for the realization of his manhood. To disregard these is foolishness. It is foolish to be careful about the things which must soon cease to be of use, in which success can be nothing more than temporary, and to neglect what must remain, and about which we

are to be concerned eternally. Prudence is action directed by a sense of spiritual values. It seeks first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

When once we have gained it we shall understand how the fools of this world may be its wisest men, and how its most sagacious representatives in commerce, in politics, in social life may after all perish in their folly. Prudence looks to the end, applies the right means, and thus tends to develop true character. Coleridge once declared that the powers of the world are often christened, but seldom Christianized. This is specially true of prudence. Men may recognize the value of prudence, but they refuse to Christianize it. But even when this is done, shall we not have to confess that, after all, prudence is a humdrum virtue? That cannot be allowed. Those who practise it acquire an ever clearer vision of life's high purpose and a growing sense of spiritual power. They see into the heart of things, finding infinite pleasure in the revelation of the truth because it helps them to attain more and more of the moral beauty of life. Prudence is full of energy, ready to enjoy heartily all that this world has to offer, yet quick to make great ventures because it knows that still greater joys remain.

XVIII

PATIENCE

LACK of patience ruins more great enterprises than lack of ideals, or lack of knowledge, or even lack of energy. Impatience begets hopelessness, driving men alternately to ill-considered activity or deadening apathy. We fail and blame the conditions in which we live, the disturbing elements in our national life, the difficulties of our own temperament, when the true secret of our distressing ineffectiveness is impatience.

It may be doubted whether many of us recognize what patience really is. We mistake its character and office. We may easily condemn it as being merely passive, quiescent, and submissive. Even Shakespeare blundered when he attempted to describe it. Rarely does he show less insight than when he pictures "Patience sitting on a monument, smiling at grief." It would have been truer if he had presented it as strong, active, courageous, resolute in fellowship to bear the ills and checks of life with a settled purpose of faithfulness to duty. Ruskin is more

813.

in correspondence with fact when he declares that "the Patience who really smiles at grief usually stands, or walks, or even runs: she seldom sits." But even this is inadequate. Let us call patience "the King of Virtues," or adopt Tertullian's description and regard it as "God's foster-daughter."

Patience is ~~more than endurance~~. It is hopefulness made constant by the confidence of faith. It has the ideal in its heart, and knows that what it treasures there will some day become a fact of life, if only men are faithful. Truth, fellowship, loyalty, virtue cannot be manufactured by the ingenuity or industry of men. They must grow, and for this time is necessary; time, with all its contrariant experiences in the dull dark nights of winter, its stinging winds and cruel cold, as well as in the bright days of spring and the glory of the summer's sun. Patience knows that the seed must lie hidden in the ground before it shows any signs of life, and even then the time will be long before the fruit is ready for the harvest. "God is patient because He is eternal." We must in our measure share His long views, and wait in happy confidence, in expectant patience, for the perfect fulfilment of the Divine purpose.

Without patience men settle down to no

continuous effort. Committing themselves to an enterprise deserving the enthusiasm with which they enter it, when the immediate results are disappointing they slacken effort and abandon their resolution. They will not wait for further developments, and, stricken with the instability of the double-minded, they sink into despair. They confuse temporary reactions with permanent tendencies, and find difficulties in the very conditions of progress. They look only at what is near and obvious, and forget that behind the apparent aimlessness of human life, its obtuseness and sloth, there is a directing Mind and Will to whom all things must finally yield obedience. Only he who discerns that all things serve Him who is the Lord of Life can possess that constancy which keeps a man patient in well-doing even though there is no sign of immediate satisfaction.

But the worst results of impatience are not found in the failure of great and noble work. They are seen in the character of those who have become the victims of its scorn and fretfulness. Starting by being impatient with the conditions in which they live and work, they end by becoming impatient with themselves. Soon they impute the ineffectiveness of their lives to an ineradicable weakness in their character, for

which they are not responsible, and against which it is useless to struggle, but on account of which they are for ever complaining. They not only blunt the instrument by which alone good work can be done, but go on to assert that the work is impossible. Impatience is faithlessness, and without faith not only is it impossible to please God, it is impossible to be at peace with oneself. And from this interior fretfulness there come impatience with one's fellow-men, and the misanthropic disbelief in the purity of their motives and their capacity for goodness.

The great need of the Church to-day is patience. Frequently it is rendered ineffective by the undisciplined and ineffective zeal of men who recommend new methods, new organization, new theology, new forms of revival, and they would rather trust to the results of some striking spectacular protest against evil than in patient well-doing. But it is ill work treating the Church as if it were a modern business to be conducted on the principle of special efforts and quick results, seeking to shape men's conduct while it shirks the task of transforming their lives. That is not the way in which the Kingdom and patience of Christ accomplish His purpose. The Church in loyalty to its mission must in patience offer its witness and grace to the world, not

without eagerness but without haste, not without care but without the half-doubt which leads to distrust in its own Gospel.

As we regard the special needs of our national life and international relations, we cannot doubt the supreme need of patience. It is true we need the leadership of men with vision, energy, and resource, but they must also be men of long views, patient men, able to teach their fellows how to endure in times of deferred hope. Lord Rosebery, in his "Life of Pitt," records a conversation which took place as to the quality required in a Prime Minister. While one said eloquence, another knowledge, another toil, Pitt said patience. We must confess that there is great wisdom in that statement. *In patientia vestra possidebitis animas vestras.*

XIX

MERCY

THERE are some who would oppose justice and mercy as if they were opposites, asserting that in so far as mercy is exercised the claims of justice are denied or ignored. But this is a shallow view. Justice asserts and vindicates the law of righteousness, but to do this completely it must take in all the facts with which it deals, regarding not merely the law broken and the person injured, but also the person who has inflicted the injury. The wrong-doer still possesses all the sacred possibilities of human personality, and the righteous dispenser of justice cannot ignore the rights, and even the needs, of the sinner. Mercy is the recognition by justice of the wrong-doer's needs, temptations, and possibilities of amendment.

Mercy is therefore necessary for justice, and the All-righteous must show mercy to the uttermost. He is the All-merciful precisely because He is the All-righteous. So far is it from being true that mercy and righteousness are

opposites, they are necessary for perfect justice. Mercy is something more than pity. I may pity a sufferer or a criminal, and under the urgency of my compassion help him in his distress or attempt to assuage his pain. But this may be little else than an instinctive movement of my own distress at another's ill fortune, the satisfaction of an irreflective emotion at the sight of woe. Mercy, on the other hand, has its element of resentment, not indeed against the sinner, but against his sin. It will do nothing which would belittle the evil which has been done, and while it strives to relieve the distress of the sufferer, it would also teach him to see the character of his actions and help him to regain his moral soundness. Mercy is regenerative. It is not content to pity. It seeks to restore.

Thus mercy is greater than justice. The latter asserts the law of righteousness and punishes the wrongdoer ; the former is no less the vindicator of the law while it seeks to restore the offender. Among peoples where mercy has been ignored, or considered to be only a sign of weakness, there has been no hope for the salvation of men. Law when left to its own course is swift to destroy those who disregard its commands. The offender must pay the penalty. Justice puts the criminal under its ban, and leaves him an outcast. It is

so absorbed in its endeavour to protect society from harm that it cares for nothing but to render future evil impossible. It has no thought for all that the criminal may be, and all that he might become in more propitious conditions. This is left for mercy's work, which may remit the penalty of law, but only that it may secure a truer obedience. It forgives that it may secure amendment of life.

Yet mercy can never consent to wrong-doing. It continually affirms the majesty of law, for where law is disregarded there is no place for mercy. They misconceive the nature of mercy who think of it as a mere abrogation of a penalty. It is reported that Byron, in retrospect of his life some little while before his death, exclaimed, "Shall I sue for mercy?" And then, after a long pause, added, "Come, come, no weakness; let's be a man to the last!" That cry is based on a misconception of mercy. It is not given to men that they may escape the result of their wrong-doing, but that they may leave the wrong itself and live in the restored freedom of men who have thrown off the slavery of evil. Mercy is remedial. It deals with sin not by condoning, but by conquering it.

To despair of mercy is the doom of the lost, the self-slaughter of the soul in its hopelessness.

It is the final act of faithlessness. Yet men may by their own act be guilty of rejecting mercy. They make this great refusal who fail to show mercy to their fellows. Mercy is only to be obtained by those who show mercy. To the unforgiving and revengeful it must seem nothing but a foolish disregard of one's rights, a weak forfeiture of power, an obtuse acquiescence in another's gain at one's own expense. Those who so utterly mistake the nature of mercy cannot receive it even though it were offered to them. Only by showing mercy to another can we learn its power, and find how Divine it is in its nature and results. Therefore the merciful only are sure that there is mercy with God, and though conscious of their sins, indeed because they are so conscious of their sinfulness, they appeal most confidently to the Divine mercy. There is nothing of truculence or irreverence in the bold affirmation of the epitaph :—

Here lie I, David Elginbrod,
Have mercy on my soul, Lord God ;
As I would do, were I Lord God,
And ye were David Elginbrod.

Bunyan, in those moving passages in which he tells us of the dark days of his sin's conviction, when he well-nigh despaired of hope itself, goes on to describe how happiness returned to him

as he reflected on the words, "If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss ; O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with Thee ; therefore shalt thou be feared." Sin is forgiven, not that men may sin the more easily, but glorify God all the more heartily for His mercy, and fear Him just because He is the All-merciful. In that fear men will show mercy to their fellows, and thus strengthen the ties of human fellowship by the tender bond of mutual forgiveness, and learn how mercy is the restorative faculty of human brotherhood, the grace of citizenship in the Kingdom of God.

XX

IMAGINATION

A MAN'S worst failures may often be traced to his noblest gifts. The most deadly perils he has to face spring from powers which might be expected to carry him forward to his greatest triumphs. Genius, it would seem, brings disaster to its owners as frequently as it carries them to successful achievement. Industry may be harnessed to avarice. Strength of will may become tyranny, and faith end in superstition. *Corruptio optimi pessima*. Nowhere is this so obvious as in the exercise of imagination.

There are some men who have no gift of vision beyond the obvious. Imagination has no part in their lives. They see what they see, and it is never very much, only in the clear light of immediate circumstance. All else is darkness. They look at their fellow-men, with their sorrows, joys, and hopes, and see them only as shadows, or as servants or rivals, if not enemies in the struggle of life. Such men are without sympathy, without hope, without deep affection, without

joy. For imagination is faith at play, going forth to the bright fields of truth beyond reason's range, assuring men that they have their part in a world beyond the measure of time, space, and sense, a world full of the beauty and power of moral perfection.

In the Bible imagination is nearly always regarded as evil, but there it stands for men's vain reasonings and the schemes they devise in their obtuse forgetfulness of God, whereby, neglecting spiritual realities and trusting instead to the fictions of their own desires, they are thrown hither and thither until they are shipwrecked against the rock of truth. True imagination spurns fiction. It is at home only with truth. When imagination strays beyond its proper sphere it cheats men by leading them to trust in vanity. Imagination is content to be always under discipline. Otherwise it may end in enfeebling sentiment and indecision, in the mere riot of wanton desire, mere day-dreaming lacking self-control, building castles in the air which crumble at the first breath of reality.

A modern writer has declared that the Gospel is a gift to the imagination as well as to the understanding. "Often the practical difficulty of believing lies more in the inability of the imagination to conceive the reality of things

spiritual and eternal than in the refusal of the reason to render assent to the evidences of their truth." The Master showed His followers how imagination may assist men to apprehend the verities of the faith, and to inspire them in days of difficult duty and stern testing. Where in all history is imagination so confidently active as in His parables of the Kingdom, His interpretation of men to themselves, His illumination of the homely duties of the housewife, the enterprise of the trader, the skill of the fisherman, the obedience of the soldier? To Him this visible world was the medium of His mind's joyous artistry, by which He revealed the activities of Divine providence and pictured the happiness of men in the presence of their God. Nowhere is imagination so prodigally employed and made so potent an agent in the revelation of truth as in the Gospels.

Tennyson in his youth one day, after gazing long over a country stream, musingly exclaimed, "What a wonderful imagination God has!" If we are bidden to think God's thoughts after Him, we are no less called to respond to the beauty with which He has adorned Nature, the tokens of His delight in the world, which is controlled by His all-sovereign will, the surprises which express the play of infinite mind at

leisure with its own imagination. No wonder the scientist needs a clear imagination for successful research into Nature's secrets. His hypotheses must be controlled by reason and his results tested in the scale of experience, but he needs imagination to carry him forward to fresh discoveries. Not only the scientist, the artist, and the poet live in its power, but every man who would understand the world and the hearts of his fellow-men must let imagination interpret what otherwise he can never discover.

It is only by imagination that we can understand the true significance of what is happening around us. We read in our newspapers of the famine areas of Central Europe, the black shadows of Russia, the terrors of which Asia Minor is the stage. The dull literalist reads, but understands nothing. But let a man's imagination be awakened, and what were words without meaning become vivid, living realities, and he finds that those enormities press so close upon his mind and conscience that he feels as if they had taken place in his own town or village, and the victims were his neighbours, his wife and children. Imagination comes to its true service in its challenge to the will, and these combined produce a living faith: faith which is sure that evil can be destroyed and righteousness

secured for the world. Plainly, the worst thing that can happen to us is lack of imagination. Without it we can neither know God, our fellow-men, nor even ourselves.

The future is hidden in the darkness. We cannot tell what exists beyond the shadows which bound our present horizon. The Christian must needs reflect that, after all, little has been told him of the nature and activities of that world to which death is the gate. Is it, then, a counsel of despair to bid him use his imagination? By no means. Imagination is not born of ignorance, but of faith. It is faith on its adventure. As we reflect on the mysteries of that other life, we may at least be sure of the permanence of Divine love and the continuity of our power of response to it. That is faith's assurance. And for the rest we will not turn away from the pictures which imagination, purified and humbled, encourages us to form on that living canvas of reality. We shall find that if it fails, and fail it must in some measure, that is because the truth is infinitely more glorious than our imagination can conceive.

XXI

THE SECRET OF REST

A SENSE of escape comes with the holidays. It is felt with varying intensity, but it is the hard worker, whether of hand or brain, to whom it comes with the full force of its strongest reactions. Few things test a man's character so simply and directly as this sense of freedom from the insistent claims of accustomed duty. To some, holidays are opportunities for irreflective abandonment to a riot of unrestraint in which they show not only the radical indiscipline of their lives, but affirm that work for them is little more than tyranny. To others, holidays are welcome not merely for their freedom, but for their new activities. They know the boon of rest's quiet diligence.

The full satisfaction of a well-spent holiday is never easily attained. Men will treasure the remembrance of beauty in mountain, sea, or far-stretching moor, of awe-inspiring moments under the wide curtain of the heavens splashed with myriad stars, and of a special insight gained

in informal conversation revealing new meaning in the most commonplace things. They will cheer themselves long years hence with the recurrent glow of friendships formed in far-away places. Books read, thoughts exchanged, ideals revealed, energies inspired, are some of the boons of a good holiday.

But for all this we must attain the secret of rest—rest for body, for mind, and for soul. Religious teachers and philosophers have often attempted to describe the qualities of true rest, the possibilities of attaining it, and the benefit men may expect to gain from it. Rest is never given except to those who have won it by true and honest work done with all their power. According to the ancient parable of Genesis, God did not rest until His work was completed. Those who seek rest for its own sake can never hope for success in their quest. It is the fruit of effort, the result of toil, the crown of labour. Moreover, it is the precedent condition of all true work for the future. The rest of God is no lifeless inanition. It is the spirit in which the Divine activity ever proceeds in the attainment of the eternal purpose framed before the foundation of the world. So does rest come in the intervals of withdrawal from work. So does it come at last when men cease work and enter into that rest

which is perfected in other spheres of life and work.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I begone
Once more on my adventure brave and new,
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to endue.

T Rest is the condition of all true moral and spiritual receptiveness. Half our failure to respond to spiritual realities is due to our fussy obsession in merely external things, our incapacity for rest. The struggle for existence in which we are now engaged roars round us, the smoke of its conflict rises above our heads, and we hear and see nothing beyond it. When we turn to amusement it is too often only to imprison ourselves further in the lower elements of life. We fight or we dance, but we are never quiet. In our struggle to possess things we never possess ourselves. In our search for pleasure we lose our manhood. We are strangers equally to the moral purpose of the world and our own spiritual conditions. Knowledge is not given except to men who will draw aside to learn it. Only in quietness, which is the condition of spiritual receptivity, do men learn the true secret of life.

Great souls have always found their inspiration in quietness. Religion has been cradled in soli-

tude. Its leaders in all ages have known the worth of rest. They have sought it far from the crowded city and the noise of the market-place. The Founder of Christianity confessed its necessity for Himself and for that communion with the Divine Father which was the very breath of His life. He sought it in mountain heights, in the quiet hours of the night, or in the house of God. He taught His disciples its infinite worth, and that they learned their lesson is proved by the history of Christianity. In quietness the revelation came to them, and in the light it gave they returned to their fellow-men with a message from God.

It is in this withdrawal from the world's work and rush that men learn to see into the heart of things. Rest restores the sight and clears the vision by dissipating passion. It enables men to give their minds with concentrated attention to the wonderful words of the Divine law, so that the language of religion, which has long been both familiar and meaningless, is endowed with a new power, till it flames with the splendour of regenerating truth. In rest men learn to see with the eyes of their understanding, and for many this gift of sight is a holiday's truest boon. It makes them witnesses to the eternal which they have seen. Those who have known

The Secret of Rest

115

this experience are ready to endorse Ruskin's declaration :—

The more I think of it, I find this conclusion more impressed upon me—that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think ; but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion—all in one.

XXII

CERTAINTY

HALF the world is smitten, not by unbelief, but by irresolution. Men neither doubt nor believe with confidence. They possess little more than opinions, and even these are loosely held, as if it were recognized that any day might prove their worthlessness. At the back of their minds men know that they cannot jettison the promptings of their religious aspirations, but, distracted by their instability, they seek refuge in a vagueness which helps them to no settled convictions. Claiming to be Christians, they are tempted to believe that such a faith as is possible for them must be based on little more than hypotheses. Lack of certainty about the realities of faith robs them of all inward certitude with regard to its power.

Bishop Butler's well-known declaration that "probability is the guide of life" has its own justification. Being such as we are, we cannot suppose that religious conviction will be easy to attain. But Butler insists that while evidence

may be insufficient to exclude all doubt, it may still afford a rational ground for action. And if this is achieved, faith may receive added support to such a degree that it acquires a new power and may be justified as based on what is found to be immutably true. Acknowledging that probability is the guide of life, a man may acquire such certitude of faith as will provide him with convictions which become the vital force of his consciousness.

In all effective religious life there must be a conviction of the certainty of the facts on which it claims to be founded, acquired by experience of their influence. But even the possession of this conviction is no proof in itself of the truth on which it is based. Every religion which has taken its place in history has claimed this note of certainty, and yet we cannot think that they are all alike true. Yet we shall be wise to welcome what is true in them rather than denounce their errors. For truth is larger than our measures, and no one can hope to grasp it in its full orbit. But this does not mean that there can be no certainties of faith and no ground for compliance to the realities of the spirit. There are mysteries in God, in ourselves, and in the world. Yet those very mysteries may be so real, so operative, so immediate to the conscious-

ness of men that they can have no doubt that they are based not on fiction, but on fact.

Certainty in religion cannot be acquired by our intellectual faculties alone. For if the mind has its rights—and nothing can justify the attempt to restrain intellectual freedom in the supposed interests of faith—we must confess that its logic is not sufficient for certitude in religion. Indeed, it is not sufficient for confidence in any department of human life. Just as art, with its different forms, can never be properly conceived merely by the intellect, so religion takes us beyond the limits of our rational faculties. It must evoke the emotions and the will before it can be in any real sense living, personal, dynamical. Indeed, it is distinguished from all other departments of life because it demands the concurrent action, on terms of equal freedom, of all a man's powers, and only when each is fully operative in true harmony with the rest can he apprehend its full significance.

(Religious) certitude can never be attained except in the personal test of life's experience. Neither the study nor the sanctuary is the place where men acquire it. Only in the rough and tumble of daily life can it be found. Thought divorced from practice never secures it. Emotion undisciplined by duty cannot attain it. Cer-

titude demands loyal obedience to the clearest conceptions of truth known to us. We have to work for it. Few, indeed, attain it without toil and constant struggle. When men deny the possibility of certitude, or declare that for them it can never be real, it is time for them to question themselves about their loyalty to their conceptions of the highest and their fidelity to the clearest revelation of truth they have discerned.

We may be uncertain of this or that element in a religion's formal teaching; we may even doubt some things which have been regarded as vital to its claims, and yet be certain of its truth as a whole. Probably many people distracted with doubt about this or that element in Christianity are still persuaded that, viewed as a whole, it is founded in truth. May we not urge that it is the part of wise men to make much more of their affirmations than of their negations? We allow ourselves to be distracted by the hesitancies which spring not from our doubt, but from our failure to trust ourselves to facts which we do not for a moment deny. We are weakened by our lack of purpose. The light shines and we see it, but because it has not the brightness of the midday sun, and much is still in darkness, we refuse to accept its guidance. Instead we puzzle ourselves with

disputes as to its constituent elements, and because we cannot be sure about these we end by refusing to avail ourselves of its help.

It is only by the certitude of faith that men can move in the world with courage and joy. Only by the convictions on which it is based can they make the world their servant and remain undismayed amidst the buffets of fortune or the numbing chill of care and doubt. Only in this confidence can they hope that their faith will win the assent of others and persuade a critical world of its truth and worth. Men do not become martyrs for hypotheses ; they do not leave the prizes of this life and endure hardship for vague aspirations ; they do not convert others by raising puzzling questions to which no clear answer can be given. It is conviction that counts. This is the true reward of faith, and only faith can win it.

XXIII

FRIVOLITY

IN nothing is a man's character more apparent than in his amusements. Those who regard all amusement as either dangerous or unnecessary are probably fewer than formerly. Recreation is necessary for effective work. Amusement has its lawful place in life.

No one nowadays would endorse Archbishop Leighton's declaration :—

Pleasures are like mushrooms—it is so difficult to distinguish those that are wholesome from those which are poisonous, that it is better to abstain from them altogether.

Perhaps Bishop Westcott, in some respects not unlike Leighton, would have to some degree sympathized with him. For the Bishop could not put the clown into his scheme of the universe. The fear of amusement in itself, however, betrays an incomplete view of man's nature. It fails to enjoy the salt of life, its zest, its merriment, its laughter.

Life's True Values

Yet we must be on our guard against being so avid of enjoyment as to make pleasure the chief object of desire. Life cannot be lived worthily except through discipline. For a work is given to each man, and he must exert himself, often in severe toil and absorbing attention, to do it. It is easy to condemn the Puritans' intensity of purpose and their "Gospel of earnestness"; but if in these days we reject their too severe standards and condemn their dour views of human nature, we must not ignore the high value of their service.

Our opportunities of enjoyment have immensely increased in modern times, but it is doubtful whether they have grown in proportion to the demand. The desire for pleasure has become so insistent that it would seem to be insatiable, and forms of diversion have been invented and accepted which would seem scarcely consistent with self-respect. Recreation has become mere amusement, and amusement has degenerated to frivolity. It is well to distinguish between these things. Recreation is the play of those faculties which are dormant in a man's daily work, or a fresh engagement of their powers in self-chosen occupation. By such complementary energy they repair the vigour of our whole manhood. Recreation, therefore, may be

called a duty to oneself, and a condition of continuance in effective work. Amusement at one time meant mere bewilderment, and sometimes deception; to-day it stands for those pleasures which demand the least effort, whether of mind or body, and are designed to pass the vacant hours in enjoyment. Amusement may be commendable or blameworthy. That depends on its character. Frivolity, on the other hand, is a mere killing of time by senseless occupation, the dissipation of energy for immediate gratification, with no results beyond itself, resulting in a weakening of the moral fibre by a satiety which ever seeks new distraction.

52 Frivolity is always found where men's love of enjoyment is in excess of their moral interests. It is the danger of those whose means of indulgence are unrestrained by the sense of responsibility, and who have found no worthy purpose for their energies. The frivolous trifle life away as if it were a vain freak of chance or an unsubstantial dream. They not only lose hold of moral truth themselves, but inevitably they end in regarding all their companions as equally senseless to higher things. This is the cause of their degradation, their startling moral perversity, their selfish obtuseness to the needs of others, and their bewildering perversion of all the

standards of morality. Frivolity ends in moral death.]

This sinister disease is found in unexpected places and in most varied forms. It may have its place in the sanctuary no less than in the haunts of pleasure. It may use the sacred language of religion as well as the vulgar patois of the demi-monde. For is it not frivolity to profess religion and not to give oneself to its service, to make its faith a theme for discussion and not to make a conscious response to its claims, to be occupied with its temporal affairs and not to accept its spiritual authority, to be bemused by excessive zeal for the small points of tradition and to neglect the awful challenge of its abiding mysteries? Frivolity has a large and varied wardrobe, and it struts on many stages.

The best antidote to frivolity is to welcome the true joys of life. The pleasures of the imagination are worthy, and so are the pleasures of the body, when they are controlled by temperance and purity. There are pleasures of the mind and of the affections; there are pleasures in duty faithfully discharged, in work done honestly, in self-sacrifice for others. And there are other pleasures—pleasures of the soul in its joyous quest for beauty, truth, and love, as it becomes conscious in an ever-increasing degree of the

spiritual realities which are the source of infinite and abiding joy. A man who has attained this joy will not be bemused by the garish pretences of frivolity. "At Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

XXIV

THE SIN OF STUPIDITY

DR B. BOSANQUET, in one of his books, tells us that "we are not hard enough on stupidity." Those who have suffered from it—and who has not?—will assent to this opinion. Far worse blunders are caused by the perversity of foolish people than by deliberate malevolence. Stupidity, mere stupidity, hindered us greatly during the war, and it is no cynical judgment of these present times to say that many of our difficulties—religious, political, and social—arise or persist from the same cause.

If stupidity were merely or mainly due to intellectual dulness we might view it without any serious condemnation. Sharp wits are not given to every man. A schoolmaster may be teased, or even baffled, by the fogged or slow brain of a pupil, but that in itself is no ground for blaming the lad. The most foolish and troublesome of his scholars may be the sharpest intellectually and the most successful in his studies. Folly is a moral rather than an in-

tellectual obtuseness. It may exist in a quick brain, but it is never found long in the company of an honest desire to do what is right. Moral rectitude corrects the faults of intellectual dullness by bracing the will to ready perseverance. Folly always degrades and weakens men.

Much has been written on fools and their folly. Some, like Erasmus, in his "Praise of Folly," have made them the object of their mingled flouts and satire. Others, like Brandt, in his "Ship of Fools," tell us the humiliations and punishments which are inevitably their fate. But, above all other books, the Bible shows their character most clearly. Both the Old and New Testaments have much to say about fools and their folly. Nowhere else are they made to reveal their character so clearly. No other literature shows so convincingly the miserable futility of their lives. Fools show themselves in strangely different guises, but apparently they never succeed ultimately in hiding their stupidity. They are so foolish that they never recognize the fact, and it is this which brings them at last to their own destruction.

There is the stupidity of the fool who fails to realize moral distinctions. He confuses good and evil, mistakes falsehood for truth, and prefers the spurious metal of present gain or pleasure

for the pure gold of true happiness. He has lost the sense of values. It is his habit to make special moral judgments in his own favour. He does that which in others he would condemn without restraint, and then invents a casuistry by which he confidently approves his action. He never looks beyond the present. He has no perspectives. He lives in the half-lights of his own mean desires or passions, and sees nothing clearly. He lives on lies till at last he cannot discern the truth. Thus he perishes morally in his foolishness.

Yet the fool may have his wisdom. The worldly-wise man knows what the world is and how to make it serve his own purposes, boasting that he knows all that is worth knowing to secure success. He sets a high value on the qualities which win the world's prizes. Judged by his own standards, he is justified. He finds what he seeks, but he is afflicted by a shallowness of heart and mind which allows no seed of goodness or depth of sympathy to appear in him. He sets his heart on the riches and pleasures of this life, forgetting all the while that they never will stand by him in the day of his distress. Since he has never shown disinterested affection he will never look for it in others. He thinks himself to be too wise to believe in its existence.

The Sin of Stupidity

129

Money, pleasure, reputation are his aim. He may succeed, but only to find that they first befool and then miserably betray him.

He that doth love, and love amiss
This world's delights before true Christian joy,
Hath made a Jewish choice :
The world an ancient murderer is ;
Thousands of souls it hath and doth destroy
With her enchanting voice.

The fool of fools, we are told on the best authority, is the fool who says in his heart, there is no God. He has no religion. God is not in all his thoughts. Many men and women to-day in the secret chambers of the soul deny what they affirm with their lips. For them, above all others perhaps, speech conceals their thought, and their folly is proved by the fact that they never discover the dissonance between their spoken words and the silent affirmation of their hearts. They may talk much about religion, or take their place in the public worship of the Church with exemplary regularity. But they have no living, energizing faith in the realities their words describe or presuppose. Whatever may be their religious profession, and its orthodoxy may be unimpeachable, they are atheists at heart. They are without God in the world. He counts for nothing in their desires, their

work, and their schemes of life. They have, for practical purposes, dispensed with Him. This is the very acme of folly. To every man there comes a time—it ought to come frequently—when we are conscious of two final realities—God and the soul. If a man has been so foolish as to ignore that fact, it will at the last come upon him to condemn a life destroyed by the sin of stupidity.

There is one fool who is commended for his wisdom. He is God's fool. He has become a fool for his Master's sake. The worldly-wise man condemns him as a senseless idealist. But true wisdom is found with him, for he sees the world, himself, and his fellows, and the tangled puzzle of life with the eyes of truth. He values every object which claims his attention in the scales of truth and justice. Faith is to him the touchstone of reality. He knows how to forfeit the prizes of this world for the enduring rewards of spiritual progress. The world counts him prodigal, senseless, thoughtless, or fantastic. But wisdom is ever justified of her children.

XXV

SELF-DECEIT

It is a commonplace of moralists that men are strangers to themselves. Self-ignorance is the most general obstacle to moral progress. No one can advance in the knowledge of the truth or respond to the claims of righteousness, unless he first acquires a sound knowledge of his own character.

Autobiographies show that the writers, though frequently acute critics of their neighbours, are seldom true judges of themselves. The art of self-delineation is not given to many. We are aware that, while in every action and word men unconsciously reveal themselves to their fellows, when our friends attempt to offer their own estimate of themselves they either amuse or amaze us by the contrast between what we know of them by direct experience and the picture presented to us by their own self-judgment. This dissonance between self-portraiture and the truth is so constantly thrust upon our notice that wise men will suspect that they themselves

cannot be immune from so common a form of self-deception. If we are ready to acknowledge that most, if not all, of those with whom we are intimate misconceive their own character, we may conclude that we ourselves are not exempt from so general an ignorance.

We are not here and now concerned with conscious hypocrisy. It is doubtful whether a man can long persist successfully in deliberate dissimulation. The hypocrite may set out to deceive other people, and he may or may not succeed, though probably in the long run he will fail, but whether he does or not he will certainly succeed in deceiving himself. This is the last punishment of hypocrisy. It was because the Pharisees in the Gospels were hypocrites who had completely persuaded themselves that they were righteous that they became morally and spiritually unimprovable. They were the victims of their own self-deceit.

If many are unconscious of their failings, their serious moral deficiencies, their callousness or selfishness, others are unaware of their moral excellence, with a quite inadequate conception of their spiritual capacities and the influence for good they exert on others. Unconsciousness of their moral beauty seems to have increased their charm and power. Theirs is the happiest of all

fortunes. But this absence of self-consciousness is the very antithesis of self-deceit. Self itself is forgotten in the vision of the ideal, in the soul's response to the true, the good, and the beautiful. Such persons shine like lights in the world, and the only knowledge they seem to have is how to carry the light that has been given to them with an unaffected sincerity.

There are many causes of our ignorance of ourselves, but most often it springs from contentment with a compromise. Evil has its own moral standards. Sin knows how to philosophize. It conceals the true nature of its ethics by the specious plea of moderation. Its argument is that after all it is not so very evil. There are other arguments which it may use in its skilful *apologia*. We have done no worse than what other men do, or it is merely compliance with the general level of business morality or the ethics of public life. These are pleas which content a good many people. When anyone is persuaded that his evil is a necessary compromise in the rival claims of life, self-deceit will surely pervert his moral sensibilities.

Men persuade themselves that if they are careful to abstain from extremes they can avoid all compunction about sin. So it comes about that moderation in sinning is regarded as no evil.

Or perhaps we may say that its evil is felt to be so inconsiderable that a man may easily pronounce his own absolution. This ministry of sin's self-condonation is the most illegitimate of all priesthoods. It makes a man in his sin the condoner of his own misdoings, and when he once solaces himself in this fashion sooner or later he loses all power to recognize moral distinctions. For evil is an artist in self-excuse, a very genius in the subtleties of perverted judgment. It does not deny the moral order of the world. It acknowledges its existence by compromising with it. Sin in its self-deceit can do homage to the noblest ethical standards. It admires them, but at a distance.

Most of us need an antidote against self-deceit. We can find it only in so far as we resolutely bring our lives to the test of what is perfect truth, goodness, and beauty. No self-examination can give a man self-knowledge unless it is conducted as in the presence of that which is perfect. Without that appeal to the eternal goodness it is at best useless self-introspection, at the worst a perversion of moral sensibility. For the Christian the tribunal of character is found in the life of Christ. In His presence, as every page of the Gospel plainly shows, men learn the truth about their characters. In finding

Him they find themselves. And when they come to His Cross all things are seen in the true light of its perfect disclosure. There the soul comes to its own apocalypse. This is the paradox of the Cross. It is at once the revelation of sin's true character, the source of penitence, the instrument of true and complete absolution, and the medium by which men apprehend the truth about themselves and about God.

XXVI

SHAME

OF all the emotions shame is probably the most potent in its influence upon social behaviour. It is difficult to over-estimate its power as a check to evil doing. Men not seldom dread the prospect of being the objects of contempt, and consider even the mildest disapproval of their fellows as one of the worst misfortunes that can happen to them. Even when their own standards are higher than their neighbours', men will conform to that which they know to be unworthy to placate the criticisms of others. For shame may deter a man from doing right as well as from wrong-doing. It may not only prevent moral progress, but sometimes even pervert that which is good.

Men may be overcome by shame for what they cannot be held responsible. The shame of low birth, of some physical deformity, or social disadvantage, over which he has had no control, may destroy a man's happiness and sour all his life. This shame cannot be caused by a sense

of moral inferiority. Rather it springs from the notion that defects of fortune prevent a man taking that place in society to which he feels he has a natural right, by reason of his ability, character, or general circumstances. Here shame comes through an inner sense of failure to attain privileges, or opportunities, or social esteem, to which a man thinks himself entitled. He feels that he has a right to regard where now he is only pitied. He is lowered in his own eyes, because he has not won a higher place in the opinion of his fellows.

Experience shows us that a man may be ashamed of doing what is right even when it is recognized as right by others. Abstractly this might seem impossible, but it is too frequent in experience to be ignored. It may be questioned whether this shame always arises from fear of others' criticisms. If a man were really certain of himself, conscious that his life was all of a piece and consistent with the particular good action in the doing of which he feels a sense of shame, he would ignore instead of fear the judgment of his fellows. For it sometimes happens that men hesitate to avow their religious aspirations not because they are ashamed of them, but because they dread the possibility of proving unworthy of their profession. Like the ever-

memorable Hales, they may shrink from confessing their faith lest by some fault in their conduct they might bring it to discredit. This perversity of shame's office is more prevalent than we like to confess.

These considerations may help us to understand why shame before others is not greatly emphasized in Christian ethics. Christianity never considers public opinion anything but an inadequate standard of faith and life, and the Church had its birth in circumstances which brought it into direct conflict with contemporary thought and morals. Its teachers spoke much of sorrow for sin, of abasement and self-judgment, but this was not because they had in view men's judgment, but because they thought only of the all-righteous God, in whose presence men lived, and before whose tribunal each must stand at the last. Unlike the Greeks, who found their highest moral motive in reverence of their fellow-men, Christians found it in reverence for God. Their shame arose from their consciousness of His presence and the knowledge that evil-doing was a wrong against infinite love. On this account their shame was all the more intense and humiliating. It was a call to the cathartic discipline of repentance that they might come into the Presence of God in the freedom of their sonship.

One kind of shame receives the strongest reprobation in the New Testament—it is being ashamed of Christ. That was an ever-present temptation in days when to be a Christian was to meet the contempt and obloquy of society, as being either mad or depraved. The temptation to this shame may have changed its form, but it still exists, and perhaps its baneful results are as real a hindrance to Christianity as in those first days of its open conflict with the world. Shame here is the very perversion of the spirit of the Gospel. It is the submission to what is known to be unworthy, homage to what is recognized as evil. Bunyan was justified in declaring that no other temptation is so cunning and so persistent and so ruinous to the disciples of Christ as shame of this sort. It can offer specious excuses. The demands of policy, the desire to preserve what is sacred from ridicule and profanity, the wish to be at peace with all men, even the plea of reverence may be offered to excuse it. But if it is not bravely overcome its sure result is apostasy. Shame has its true office only when it makes us ashamed to offend against the will of God.

XXVII

RETRIBUTION

MORAL deterioration is a fact of experience, however we may account for it. We may disguise its existence and fail to acknowledge its baneful results, but the possibility of the slow process of this paralysis of a man's moral and spiritual powers is too real to be ignored. "The inexorable law of moral consequences" acts in spite alike of our protests or our obtuseness, and wise men will recognize it.

We acknowledge the revenge which outraged conscience can take on a man's peace of mind. It is the source of the bitterest regret and most poignant unhappiness known to the human heart. The Greek poets found in it the theme of their tremendous tragedies, and literature ever since has made this law of retribution its most impressive problem. We cannot ignore it, for no man has altogether escaped its visitations. Some may seek to repair the injury they have inflicted, and in lifelong self-sacrifice atone for past misdoing; but memory still perpetuates its pain and

fear, and conscience remains unsilenced in its persistent reproof.

There is, however, a worse result of evil than this. An uneasy conscience may be drugged to senselessness so that it no longer acts to a man's disquiet. It may become dead to moral distinctions. Such is the sure result of habitual acquiescence in evil, the certain issue of persistence in deliberate and known wrong. By this means a man's moral nature may become so depraved and perverted that he no longer can distinguish between good and evil, truth and falsehood, purity and lust. Moral values are confused. Evil becomes its good and good its evil. Virtue has no attraction and the appeal to high motives has no meaning. With a mind smirched and befouled no pure thought is possible. With hardened heart there is no response to spiritual impressions.

The Bible does not fail to draw attention to this obduracy in language which is all the more impressive because it does not hesitate to show that it fulfils a divine law. The Great Teacher of men repeatedly draws attention to it. He declared that some would not listen to His appeal, and knew that the power of hearing would be theirs no longer. His message was for those who had ears to hear. The rest could learn nothing.

And nations as well as individuals can be afflicted with this atrophy of moral life, this obduracy against truth, goodness, and love, this judicial blindness of perverted manhood.

Martineau, in describing this process of compunction's defeat, shows how the moral powers are gradually destroyed by the autocracy of self-will, and declares that the result is simply this: the characteristic human element is gone; the man has disappeared, and in his place there stands either brute or devil. Though Martineau refuses to endorse the attempt sometimes made in fiction and theology to represent the fiendish nature as having a positive preference for wrong, and rejects the picture of Milton's Satan who cries, "Evil, be thou my good," he still insists that when the characteristic strife of an ethical, *i.e.* of a human, nature ceases, there is a fall into the Satanic state.

Confronted with this law of moral degradation, men must needs recognize the supreme importance of maintaining and developing their moral powers. If they would avoid the terrible fate of the obdurate, they must recognize the reality of moral distinctions and follow the highest that is known to them. We cannot be content with the second best without grave peril. Even that which is good becomes evil if we see the better or the best

and refuse to accept it. And not only must we be responsive to the highest truth and goodness we know; we must go out in search of further knowledge, travelling always to a purer light with its ever-waxing revelation of the ideal.

These considerations help us to understand the startling affirmation of both the ancient Hebrew prophets and the Apostolic writers that God hardens men's hearts as He hardened Pharaoh's heart, and the heart of Israel in the time of its ruthlessness. We trace this fate to the action of moral uniformities; but the inspired writers do not shrink from attributing it to a personal God. They were wiser than we are. Behind all that takes place in the world of nature, morals, or religion, there is One whose will they express and whose law they fulfil. The conviction that He is the Father of All, the Fountain of Mercy, is so far from encouraging us to look for exceptions or delays in the law of moral retribution that it certifies all the more plainly the terror of His assignation of punishment against deliberate refusal of good, His doom of moral death as the judgment of persistent evil. "There is mercy with Thee; therefore shalt Thou be feared." The goodness of God has its divine severity.

We reject the weird and fantastic fancies of hell which men of other times have held as

part of the Christian creed ; but they stood for a truth which we cannot ignore. Men may become dead in sin, dead to truth and goodness, hardened in heart, with no appreciation of moral beauty, with no purity of affection, with no life of spiritual aspiration. And what is a worse fate than this ? Such is the verdict of the Great Judge against persistent and wilful evil. He is ready to forgive and swift to show mercy ; but even forgiveness and mercy become terrible to those who have so perverted their manhood as to disregard their appeal.

XXVIII

RECREATED MANHOOD

Two estimates of human life are offered for our acceptance. The first insists on the innate sinfulness of men. It emphasizes certain phrases in the New Testament, and especially an important element in the teaching of St Paul, which assert the radical evil of our nature. It repeats such declarations as "All have sinned," and applies the language the Apostle uses of himself to every individual: "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." The total depravity of mankind has become an article of faith to the exponents of this view.

The second as clearly asserts the essential goodness of humanity. Those who hold it insist that there is a capacity of response to what is good, true, and beautiful even in the most degraded. Against the doctrine of original sin it insists on the fact of original righteousness, declaring that if we would but rouse a man's will he is always found possessed of powers of responsive virtue. It is declared that herein lies

the source of true moral education. Treat a man as if he were honourable, encourage him to believe in his own capacity for goodness, and he will not fail to respond to your efforts. You have only to succeed in persuading him to believe in his own innate goodness to secure the full growth of his manhood.

It is not sufficient to acknowledge that there are elements of truth in these divergent estimates of human life. Nor can we be content to say with Coleridge that as there is much beast and some devil in man, so is there some angel and some God in him, and being what he is he can be neither entirely evil nor entirely good. This not only encourages a confusion of moral judgments, but may lead to a disbelief in any possibility of reaching the ideal of manhood. When men are satisfied with a compromise in the moral sphere, sooner or later they blur distinctions between what are essentially opposites. No doubt the exponents of each of these views of human life can find much to support their theories in the New Testament, but the apostolic doctrine does not end with any attempt either to correlate or to harmonize them. We do not read in the New Testament about any compromise of mingled good or evil in men. It insists on the necessity of developing the one

and destroying the other. Instead, the declaration is made that a man must be recreated before he can grow to the full stature of his manhood. The Christian is not so much a good man as a new man.

Regeneration, recreation, is announced as the ~~process~~ of humanity's true development. We have heard much in recent years of the once-born and the twice-born, and as the terms are used by psychologists like William James, we recognize that they represent real experiences. But the distinction to which they draw attention is one of processes rather than of origins and results in the spiritual sphere, and though they may differentiate the methods by which men respond to spiritual facts and are fashioned by them, they fail to account for life outside man's ordering, and they ignore the supernatural forces upon whose operation all spiritual experience depends. They do not sufficiently emphasize the view that the Christian is a recreated, a regenerated man, that he receives a new life, with new powers and qualities, which if allowed free operation carries him on to the ideal of a perfect manhood.

This life issues from the co-operative activity of the Divine Spirit and the spirit of man, by which there is born a new manhood endowed

with a purified will, content with nothing less than a determined effort after righteousness, directed by an enlightened consciousness of spiritual reality and an ever clearer knowledge of the truth. Such a new-born man not only attains a larger life for himself, he also seeks and works for a new heaven and a new earth. The concerns of this world are held to be not less but more important than before. They are not only the media of a service and discipline which develop his spiritual manhood ; they provide a sphere for the full energies of his recreated life. Those who share this new life discount the asceticism which drives men to retire from the claims and temptations of the world because they find in them opportunities for the exercise of their full citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven. Character is no longer tied to circumstance. The new man's life is a harmonious whole.

When the apostolic writers tell us of the new man they show us what he is, or rather what he is becoming, by describing it in the terms of Christ's Perfect Manhood. The new man is like Him not in circumstance or powers, but in character and purpose. Thus St Paul bids his converts "put on the new man," and when he repeats his injunction calls them to "put on

Christ." That Perfect Life exhibits the contrast between the "old man," who, judged by it, is entirely evil, while it shows how even in the most degraded there remains the power of response to the example of the Perfect Man. We thus learn how to reconcile the assertion of man's total depravity with belief in his ability to attain perfect righteousness in the new birth of the Spirit. And this recreation is for every disciple. The Sacrament of initiation into the Christian Society thus becomes the medium of the new birth, and every baptized man has the assurance of the regenerated life. The Christian is born again. He is a new man.

The vigour, the freshness of this recreated manhood remains. Time cannot impair it. Growth is its law, service its expression. It is endowed with the enterprise of perpetual youth, its sustained ardours, its confidence in the present, its sure hope of the future. Those who share it have an enduring happiness in their hearts. They are enfranchised citizens of a new kingdom. For them the ideal is the real. Made in the image of God, they are more and more transformed into His likeness.

XXIX

SOCIAL PROGRESS

FOR a century industrial conditions have disturbed the nation's life. If there have been quiet intervals, there have been recurrent periods of violent disturbance, tending always to become more and more acute. In the present clash there is as little reason for panic as for apathy. In our social and industrial conditions, as in other departments of life, progress has been achieved through constant unrest and reorganization. If now there are special reasons for anxiety there ought also to be special grounds of confidence in the demand of industry for better conditions of work and a more ample reward. It is possible, of course, that our civilization may become bankrupt and dissolve by a process of social disintegration, but a truer and a more useful course is to rely on the conviction that beyond all contentions, suspicions, and animosities, there is a possibility of happier and better conditions for all. Pessimism, at any rate, can do no one any good, and it must be avoided as a snare.

It is natural that the present turmoil should be regarded as a direct challenge to Christianity, and those who profess its faith cannot shirk an appeal which may seem to them much like a threat, where it is not a scornful accusation. Such a challenge may be due to the consciousness that a revision of economic conditions cannot by itself do what is hoped for in the re-ordering of society. It implies the conviction that social questions are fundamentally moral questions, and it is only in proportion as this is recognized that we can hope for their satisfactory settlement. At the back of all contrariant influences, there is the human factor, the fears and failures, the hopes and aspirations of men. Until these are dealt with, we cannot hope for a true and lasting peace. That is to say, that there is no possibility of founding true and stable fraternity until moral considerations are made paramount.

There is no hope for any relief until we resolve to regard each man in the full light of his personality. We must first deal with him, whether capitalist or workman, as a person, consciously or unconsciously demanding freedom in conditions which shall give him every opportunity for the fullest exercise of all his powers. The supreme task of each man is the development of character,

which is the resultant of all that he thinks, says, does, and aspires after. Similarly, the community must have its own true life, expressing itself freely in conditions which safeguard and evoke all its latent capacity for righteousness, brotherhood, and spiritual power. All this corresponds to the affirmation of Christianity that, to attain the fullness of life, dominance must be given to those spiritual realities without which manhood must be dwarfed or perverted.

In the past, social reconstruction was best achieved and ordered when men united to allow their faith in the unseen to set their standards. No movement had so immediate and direct an influence on medieval society as that of St Francis; he offered, not a larger share of material satisfactions or a better economic system, but the deeper content and happier vigour of a life inspired by love for God and man. Similarly, the Quakers showed their fellows how men have within themselves a light of the Divine Spirit which, if followed brings not only peace to men's hearts, but nobler and happier social conditions for the community.

We must learn this lesson if only to understand the order in which we must proceed to the new

age. Men are too ready to insist that a new social system must first be established before we can hope for the advent of a nobler standard of morals and a true apprehension of religion. They look for social reconstruction as the condition precedent to a higher morality, a greater readiness to serve others, and a more eager response to the verities of faith. But this is to mistake the true order of development. No temporal conditions, however attractive, no economic or industrial order, however just, can themselves secure the things which make life worth living. We must first acknowledge the supremacy of the spirit before we can become masters of the world and make its conditions the security of true and happy living.

The pity is that the Church has not succeeded in persuading men of the law of all true life. The responsibility of its failure must be shared by all who profess the Christian name. But there is no reason why we should be overwhelmed by despair. Rather it is a call to fresh courage, a challenge to faith's audacity. It is the part of faithful Christian men to follow the ideals revealed by their Master, to accept the principles on which He insisted, and by their lives after His pattern to bring to the extraordinarily complex problems of modern social life the divine

gifts of that liberty which is based on righteousness, that equality which is founded on mutual service, that fraternity which is shared by those who believe that all are children of the one Father in Heaven.

ACHIEVEMENT

XXX

UNCHANGING PRINCIPLES

IT is claimed with confidence that modern criticism of the New Testament has served to re-establish much which seemed to be seriously shaken by the scholarship of the last century. No doubt this is true, but it is not the whole truth, for though the traditional dates and authorships are for the most part retained, there have emerged certain results which distinctly modify our handling of these writings. The fact that the first three Gospels are closely related to each other in a close interdependence affects our estimate of their combined witness, while the detection of editorial influence has its importance. Moreover, our conception of the thought and language of the fourth Gospel has to be revised in more than one direction.

The Epistles, too, have their problems. We are coming to a new estimate of all that Paulinism stands for. The Apostle is extremely difficult for us of the twentieth century to understand. We are not so certain as our predecessors were

that we can follow all his arguments or identify ourselves with his conclusions. We feel that some of the doctrines which have been considered central in his teaching require considerable re-statement before they can match our thought or experience. This is partly due to his special use of the Old Testament, his Rabbinism, and the conditions of the Churches with which he had to deal, but it is also due to the fact that he was all his life moving towards a more complete apprehension of the significance of the Gospel he was called to preach. St Paul would be the last to claim the possession of all knowledge, and it is no reversal of our estimate of his value to Christian life and thought to be conscious that we have moved beyond his horizon.

But when all is said and done with regard to the temporary elements in the New Testament, the devout reader, we are persuaded, will learn more and more of its value if he adheres loyally to its guidance in the light of the knowledge of his time. We are often reminded that it is the function of the Church to teach and the Bible to prove, and we may accept this dictum if we remember that the Church itself must learn as well as teach, and that its ability for the latter task is dependent on its readiness to respond to the gradual disclosure of the truth

which the Spirit of Truth is making to men. But however this may be, it is by the Church's faithfulness to the principles enshrined in the New Testament that it will most effectively preserve those elements in its life which will save it from the rigidity which accompanies a strict adherence to tradition, or the feebleness which results from a too facile acceptance of the passing philosophies of each age. So long as the Church is true to the proportion of faith and the ideals of life taught in the New Testament it will be able to respond to men's changing needs by an effective interpretation of the changeless Gospel.

Christianity has always been most vigorous when it has shaped its faith most fully and frankly in harmony with the New Testament. George Tyrrell once rather petulantly wrote: "So-called 'New Testament Christianity' is purely and blindly reactionary: it is a denial of all flexibility and vitality in the religion of Christ." He justified that statement by the further assertion that "Its perfect realization were only possible if we could miraculously change ourselves back into the mental and social conditions of Palestine 2000 years ago." But of the New Testament writings comparatively few move in the circle of the Palestinian Church. They

are attempts to meet the needs of various communities throughout the Greco-Roman Empire, and in them may be found the germinant revelation of Christianity expressed to match the needs not only of the Jew, but of the Greek and the Roman, the peoples whom we may regard as the founders of all modern religious thought. The New Testament will never be held at its true value until we regard it as sanctioning the presentation of the one faith in varied forms to meet the diverse and changing experiences of human life.

The supreme office of the New Testament in each and all its parts is to reveal the Christ to whom they all witness. Those wonderful writings, strongly marked as they are by their authors' character and experience, which they take no trouble to conceal or repress, yet manifest One who appeals to the homage of men and women of all ages, and justifies the faith of all who acclaim Him Master. If once this purpose of the New Testament is understood, we shall not be distracted by the temporary elements found in it. The fact that St Paul is proved to have been mistaken in his anticipation of an imminent Advent of the Lord will no longer trouble us. Nor shall we think it necessary to accept as a fixed law such a regulation as that which bade women

be silent in the church. Nor shall we look for an organization of the Church capable of no development. These are not the things that control us. Take the New Testament as a whole. Grasp its purpose. It stands for one fact only. The fact of Christ: Christ for all men, in all times.

Responding to this purpose of the New Testament, men will find themselves confronted by His claim to Kingship. It is no fault of His that the Church has so often failed to recognize the true character of His sovereignty, and has identified it too closely with its own traditions. The Kingdom is wherever men act righteously, and serve in self-sacrifice for the good of their fellows in the spirit of its Founder. Those who acknowledge His rule come to their true inheritance. Their right is vindicated for them in the New Testament, which is the charter of freedom for those who would prove themselves servants of such a Master.

XXXI

THE GREAT QUEST

CHRISTIANITY is the religion of those who know. The Christian is the true Gnostic. It must be confessed that many who claim the sacred name have not yet passed through faith to knowledge, but all sincere believers have made this venture and know Him that is true. Yet even they know nothing as they ought to know, and must needs give themselves to a diligent search in the quest of clearer truth. This is the paradox of the Christian's experience. Already he possesses the truth, yet life for him is a diligent search for further knowledge.

These two elements in Christian experience cannot be separated: they are mutually dependent. If a man has no knowledge he cannot seek for more. If he did not seek for that which is unknown he would lose his appreciation of that which he has learned already. That which he knows is retained only as it is increased by further search into the unknown. For knowledge if it is to live must be continually increased.

And the truth must be gained by direct apprehension before it can be true for us. Authority offers us its witness, and he is proud and self-willed who will not give it his earnest attention, for it represents the sacred experience of those who in the past have sought and found the truth. But it is to be valued as a guide to the seeker of clearer truth rather than as a substitute for the search. It may serve as a test of the value of what we have learned by our own quest, but it cannot rightly become the means of saving us from our own personal effort. Truth is never true for us if we have received it only at second-hand.

There is much which may be shrouded in darkness, yet the light of truth is clear enough to make the next step plain. Mystery surrounds us always, and even the truth itself has its own reserves. Truth itself has its own darkness, and Tennyson's question points to it in impressive terms :—

Who knows whether revelation be not itself a veil to hide the glory of that love which we could not look upon without marring our sight and our onward progress ?

No one can engage in the great quest for truth without the conviction that it exists and that he may know it. If there is no ultimate truth the whole world is irrational and life has neither

meaning nor purpose. We are the sport of blind force or chance, and the mind of man is a nest of dreams which house vain hopes to torture him with questions which can have no answers. To recall a phrase of Newman's, to deny the possibility of truth's attainment is to be like a man looking into a mirror and finding no reflexion of himself in it. To deny the existence of ultimate truth is to sink into blind negation. But believing in the reality of truth we are persuaded that we can know more and more of its content and meaning. Life becomes a great adventure for truth, and we search diligently, persuaded that by purity of heart and faithfulness of life we shall find it.

The seeker engaged on his great quest must order his life with careful discipline, and his success is determined by his faithfulness to what he has already learned. New questions arise which serve to convince him of his ignorance. As he goes forward he is conscious of increasing mystery, but if he remains faithful to such light as he has already attained he finds that corresponding to his efforts there is an ever-growing brilliance of revelation manifesting One who on His part wishes to be known to everyone who seeks in purity of heart and consecrated will. When once this conviction possesses a man,

mystery itself is but the source of further revelation of the truth.

The true Gnostic is the true Sceptic. He knows, and still he seeks, searches, questions, and examines. In this dual office he has his own satisfactions. Though he is condemned by those who, trusting to tradition, hold that further search is useless, and by those who deny any reality in things supernatural and count the search for truth a vain endeavour, he has his happiness. The search itself confers its own exhilaration, for every seeker would endorse the declaration of Lessing :—

Did the Almighty, holding in His right hand Truth, and in His left Search after Truth, deign to tender me the one I might prefer, in all humility, but without hesitation, I should request Search after Truth.

But there is something further. The man who searches faithfully bears a secret in his heart. It is the present guerdon of his quest's perfect satisfaction.

XXXII

FAITH AND LIFE

A GREAT mistake is made when the present age is charged with indifference to religion. On the contrary it is not, we think, overbold to affirm that a desire for spiritual experience and a recognized need of faith is more widespread to-day in this country than it has been for the last fifty years. It must also be added that this desire and conscious need fails to induce a large proportion of the community to turn for satisfaction to the recognized exponents of Christianity in our churches and chapels. On both sides there is puzzlement and estrangement. Those who might be supposed to be natural allies seem unable to appreciate each other, and instead of fellowship there is mutual criticism and distrust.

The problems these facts present have their interest and importance in many ways. We refer to them now to point out that their solution can never be expected until those who feel the stress of their own confessedly unsatisfactory condition in religious matters proceed to action on their

own account. It is useless and often unjust to blame the Church—by which we mean organized Christianity in its varied ministries and systems—for repeatedly in the last few years the most able and zealous of Christianity's exponents have boldly challenged their fellow-countrymen to come to a decision about their religion. In earnest terms and in a variety of forms expressing personal conviction and zeal for the progress of the faith they have proclaimed the Gospel as they have learned it. Yet the result seems disappointingly small.

What, in these circumstances, is to be done? There are some who deliberately reject Christianity, but they are comparatively few in number, and for the present we may leave them outside our purview. We are dealing rather with those who, while acknowledging themselves dissatisfied or distracted by the feebleness of their hold on the Faith of the Gospel, desire that it shall become real to them and made an effective force in their lives. They are Christians, but they want to be better Christians. They know the difficulties of faith, but they are equally aware of the sterility of unfaith. In the great and tense moments of life they are aware of something—shall we not say Someone?—forgotten in the rush of daily work and pleasure who seems strangely intimate

with the secrets of their hearts, their needs, aspirations, joys and fears, and they would like to retain the radiance of that Presence.

Those whose experience in any way corresponds to this should be advised first to give definite expression either in speech or in writing to what they already have found to be true about spiritual things. They rightly refuse to class themselves with unbelievers. What, then, do they believe? It may not, perhaps, be easy to give a satisfactory answer to that question, but it is scarcely consistent with self-respect not to attempt to find it. A man ought at least to be able to state the faith that is in him. Until he does this he can scarcely be aware of its true character. A confession of faith is necessary for our awareness of what we believe or disbelieve. And it must be our own deliberate act. Each of us must declare "*I believe.*"

When our affirmation of faith is made we must try to find out its implications. This can be done in no other way than by testing it in the practical affairs of daily life. If a man cannot be fully aware of the character of the creed he professes until he confesses it, he can never recognize its true significance until he submits to its claims in the inner recesses of his thought, emotion, and will, and tests it in conduct. Whatever may be the faith a man professes, it is never really his

own until it is applied in daily duty, in its simplest and its most complex elements. Not till then can religion's true meaning and power be discerned. A man may lack faith's vigour not because he does not believe, but because he does not trust it courageously enough to put it to the test of life.

Many waste time in mourning their lack of faith when they would be far more worthily employed in putting to use the faith they have. They seek what they cannot find because they go abroad for what is already in their hearts. They lament that they are without much that they desire while they fail to use what is already theirs. Even a little faith has great power, and it grows by use. In fact, this is the only way in which it can acquire strength and force and confidence. Perhaps the most important task which confronts the Church to-day is to welcome such faith as it finds in men, not blaming them because it is so weak and imperfect, but encouraging, inspiring, guiding them to venture such faith as they have by following its guidance so far as it will lead them. As the Church does this with patience it will find that men will welcome its challenge with increasing confidence till they yield themselves with conviction tested in the manifold experience of life to the fullest realization of faith's splendour.

XXXIII

THINGS THAT MATTER

WHILE the influence of the Church has steadily diminished in recent years, the need of a revival in religion is everywhere acknowledged. In many quarters such a revival is eagerly desired. Men know their need, but are puzzled to satisfy it. What is now often offered to them seems rather to mock their distress than to encourage their faith, or to excite their criticism rather than to evoke their loyalty. The Church is apparently distracted by secondary controversies. The layman, it is true, may not always be able to judge their real significance and relative importance, but he finds them barren, chilling, and unsatisfying. He hears disputes rather than the Word of God.

With desires and hopes, real enough though often feebly felt and rarely expressed, men find the Church apparently without strength for the mediatorial and regenerating service for which it was founded and equipped by its Master. It seems so uncertain of its message, so distracted

by trifles, so self-conscious of its weakness that it seems to have no clear message to announce. We may sympathize with the attempt of the Modernists to secure liberty of doctrinal interpretation, with the endeavour of the Evangelicals to restrain doctrine and ceremonial rejected at the Reformation, with the claims of the Anglo-Catholics to express their fellowship with other branches of the Church by adhering to traditional rites and ceremonies, but what importance have these questions to men who seek the grace of the Gospel, and desire to worship the Lord Whom it proclaims ?

From all sides in the Church one hears the language of exaggeration which betrays fear instead of faith, strife instead of fellowship. Why talk of shaken creeds when the question discussed is only the mode in which men conceive certain facts which all profess to accept ? Why protest against the critical study of the Scriptures when all declare that they reveal the Divine will for men, and manifest the Saviour of mankind ? Why insist on elaborate ceremonial and repeat terms which have long been to many the symbols of superstition when all confess that he who would worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth ? It is time to pass beyond this war of words to the eternal realities, to insist on

them, and to manifest their power in human life. The Church of England is weakened almost to ineffectiveness by partisanship.

Bishop Creighton, from whose loss the Church of England still suffers, was aware that much of the Church's distress may be traced to what is done in London. What is done there often forms a precedent which is followed in other places where conditions are very different. Consequently some of the London clergy who think only of the needs of the limited congregations to which they minister, have introduced forms of services and standards of doctrine which have been widely adopted in the country to the grave hindrance of religious life in many parishes.

"I think," said Dr Creighton once to his clergy, "that perhaps this danger is not so strongly before your minds as it is bound to be before the mind of your Bishop."

Probably if that truth had been clearly remembered by the authorities of the Church in London since his death many of the present difficulties of the Church of England would have been avoided.

The Church is charged to bring the Christian faith to bear on the whole of our national life. It exists to interpret and apply that faith to a people with special traditions and strongly-

marked characteristics. It must not be afraid to take a line of its own : what it does will affect its members not only here, but beyond the seas, in America and throughout the world. There is no need for diffidence in the attempt to respond to this high office. The Church of England must return to its first principles. It loses strength in the attempt to commend its teaching as a philosophy for the few. It forfeits its influence by reverting to a medievalism which stands to many for obscurantism. Its mission is to vindicate Christian faith, liberty, and order. It must expound the faith in terms to match national life, by sound learning seeking to interpret the truth it has received, and by diligence and self-denial commending it to the people. It must preach the Gospel. It must insist on those matters on which all agree rather than distract its members by controversies where differences are inevitable. It must devote itself to the things that matter.

XXXIV

ETERNITY IN THE HEART

Text
“HE hath set eternity in their hearts.” This phrase, as it stands, represents a truth of large significance. There is infinity outside us, and over against it we find eternity within us. We can never fully gauge or apprehend either. We are unable to reach far into their mysterious borders, but there is always something both within and without us beyond our understandings, our affections, and our moral powers. They are the source of the most real, the most powerful, the most awful and most inspiring experiences of life.

Professor Edward Caird declared that we must first discover the infinite in the impossibility of being satisfied with the finite, or limiting our thoughts to it. The recognition of the infinite is the silent presupposition of true manhood. Man is never content to rest in an object which he can entirely apprehend. He must go out into the unknown, into the infinite. And when he turns within himself he finds that there also he is

carried beyond the range of things temporal to experiences which imply the existence of spiritual realities deeper than those he is able to fathom. In the secret fountains of personality the supernatural is real and satisfying. We could have but little happiness in the world and could recognize but little of our meaning of human life if they did not lead us beyond ourselves.

Ah, love, could you and I with him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of things entire,
Would we not shatter it to bits, and then
Remould it nearer to the heart's desire.

Harmony of life, which we crave with an inextinguishable longing, cannot be found unless we exercise this consciousness of eternity in our hearts. It is instinctive, and cannot be thwarted except at the expense of the best within us. We refuse the great treasures of life by disregarding activities in ourselves which cannot be confined to the seen and the temporal. We starve ourselves because we do not draw on the true sources of our manhood. For the eternity in the heart is not merely an assurance of immortality. It is something more. It endows us with a present consciousness of God infinite in truth, goodness, and beauty. Responding to that vision and the knowledge it confers we live in the fulness of our manhood in fellowship with Him.

In no sphere of life can we ignore this consciousness of the eternal and infinite within ourselves. It gives a meaning to Nature, its beauty and its terror, finding in its myriad activities the revelation of a Person with whom man has affinity. It convinces us that we may not attempt to rest satisfied in what is merely external to ourselves. What is without corresponds to what is within. Both express the same Eternal Spirit seeking to disclose itself to men. Religion for those who have eternity in their heart cannot be confined to any external system. It is impossible to express it adequately either in an organization, a ritual, or a creed. These things are necessary. They correspond to man's needs, and without them we should be lost in a maze of perplexity, or be enfeebled beyond measure by the lack of that fellowship which is indispensable to human life. Yet they are but means to an end. They are never ultimate and final. Spirit with spirit must meet.

The eternity in man's heart points him to the Vision of God within and without himself. They cannot be separated. The one implies the other. But if the prophet is conscious of the Presence of the Eternal high and lifted up in the heavenly places, it is because he knows that revelation is also made in the secret depths of his own manhood.

We may look on nature and discern the beauty of God, but we cannot know what He is in character until we find the secret in our own hearts. The clearest revelation of the infinite and eternal granted to mankind has come through the channels of experience shaped by the desires and ideals men have felt within themselves. Those who have been the prophets of Divine revelation have learnt its secret in their own hearts. Nor can anyone understand its meaning until he, too, turns his mind within and being at home with himself finds God there.

Yet all must end in mystery. Revelation is as clearly the assurance that much still remains unknown as the unveiling of what has been hidden. This is no cause for dissatisfaction. It is the condition of progress, the inspiration of effort, the motive of that discipline which secures purity of heart and a readiness for clearer knowledge and new duty.

XXXV

FORMALISM

FORMALISM has no good repute, and yet it may be attributed quite unjustifiably to men animated by the strongest religious aspirations. We are poor judges of men's motives, and in the sphere of religion especially the wise will not attempt this delicate and self-imposed task. What may seem to be the conventional observance of ordinances may be the expression of the sincerest faith, protected and expressed by those very forms which seem to the observer the negation of true worship. Yet formalism is a real danger, and too often exists where living religion has long since vanished. The form remains though the spirit has fled.

Formalism is not confined to the professors of religion. Those who criticize or oppose all forms of faith may be its worst victims. There is a cant of negation as well as of affirmation. We have only to consider the current criticisms of the Church, its teaching and practice, to be conscious that there can be much pharisaism

in those who most vigorously protest against it in other people. The conventions of scepticism are as real as the conventions of orthodoxy, and it is equally easy for the professors of either to rest content in them. Formalists are not all of one type, nor are they all in one camp. For, after all, what is formalism? It is the use of speech without conviction, the exaltation of custom to the neglect of truth, lip-service, whether of assent or protest, which ends in itself. If in religion it usually stands for compliance with rules of worship or professions of faith without interior conviction, we must not forget that with equal justification it is to be applied to denials made without reflection, or expressions of interest in truth which it does nothing to attain.

Formalism may assume many shapes. A man may be generous in action but lack generosity of soul. He may bestow all his goods to feed the poor and even give his body to be burned, but lacking the true sincerity of love for his fellows he is a formalist. A man must not only be chaste in action, he must be pure in heart and clean in thought. It is required not only that he deals justly with his neighbours, he must be just in character. He must endorse his speech by the affirmation of his deeds, and his deeds by the assent of his soul. Action must be quickened by

the life-giving spirit, and it is the spirit alone which gives it life and saves it from formalism. Form there must be,—but it is never more than a means to an end—the expression of life, the instrument of its action, the means of its effectiveness.

Forms can never be perfect, and therefore they can never be permanent. Faith is continually outranging them. The vision it sees cannot be expressed in terms of this world. It has ideals, aspirations, dreams beyond its small measures. The forms of faith are always being rebuilt by sincere men :—

They, in the ages lying
In the buried past of the earth,
Built Nineveh with their sighing,
And Babel itself with their mirth ;
And o'erthrew them with prophesying
To the old of a new world's worth :
For each age is a dream that is dying,
Or one that is coming to birth.

Perhaps formalism in religion is most effectively countered by remembering that our faith does not depend for its power on our care for its forms or our devotion to its discipline. We do not make religion. It makes us. Our duty lies in appropriating its power, its spirit, its life. When once we have learned this lesson we shall observe religion's forms, but we can never become their slaves.

There is a type of formalism which is sometimes taken to be its very antithesis, and yet displays its most baneful results. Abandoning all outward expressions of religion as either otiose or false, it seeks its satisfaction in impersonal ideals. Much which passes for mysticism has its danger here. When men talk of the great Over-Soul, the Absolute, the One in All and the All in One we must needs ask what they mean. Has that for which such terms stand a personal life, thinking, willing, loving? Or do these phrases end with themselves, mere forms, and nothing else? Ideals divorced from personality are mere shapes, mere idols of the mind.

There can be no loyalty unless it is animated by affection, and there can be no affection for impersonal ideals. Goodness, truth, and beauty can only be attained as they are seen in a person, for only then do they evoke that goodness, truth, and beauty which lies dormant in ourselves. If personal being is ignored, such terms as righteousness, love, truth, are mere words without life, without meaning. It is because Christianity proclaims their existence in a Person that it can produce that ardour and glow which fires the spirit of man to make the ideal a reality in his own personal experience, and gives him power to express it in terms of his own life.

XXXVI

REVERENCE

MUCH discussion has taken place as to the origin and office of reverence. Some, like Goethe, deny that reverence is an essential element in man's life, and declare that no one brings it with him into the world. Others, like Ruskin, strongly assert that it is inherent in human nature. All, however, agree that it is essential for true human life, and that one of the aims of education is to evoke and train it.

Reverence implies the recognition of something greater than ourselves regarded not merely with admiration, but with awe. It has no doubt as to the reality and sovereignty of goodness. Men may bend before what is beautiful, but they revere only what is to them morally excellent. Reverence expresses the consciousness of inferiority in the presence of a life higher than our own. Argue about it as we may, there is something of awe in reverence, but not awe alone. For though truth, righteousness, purity, self-sacrifice subdue us till the sense of their moral beauty

makes us fear, there is also an element of gratitude in reverence at its best. For the true character and worth of goodness is never fully recognized until we feel its power in our own lives, but when we are once conscious of its refining and uplifting influence awe is mingled with gratitude, till reverence has its joys no less than its fears.

From this it is clear that reverence can never be fully active in the heart of man who thinks himself to be in the presence of merely impersonal forces, however terrible or beautiful they may be. These may subdue or terrify him. Sometimes they may perhaps thrill him with inexpressible delight, but he can feel nothing of the reverence of gratitude for what has no moral character. The highest reverence is not given except to perfect goodness manifesting itself in good will. But this is only another way of saying that reverence can never reach its full expression except when we know ourselves to be in the presence of the all-righteous and all-merciful God. It is then that a man learns what worship really is, and finds in it awe and gratitude, shame and joy, fear and confidence. This is the paradox of reverence, that just when a man is most conscious of his own baseness he most vividly rejoices in the purity and righteousness of the Most High. True worship is found to have this dual quality

and becomes that oblation of sinful man before infinite love issuing in an ever keener moral receptivity in the hearts of the reverent worshipper.

Not seldom men have held reverence to be nothing more than servility, to be condemned as fostering superstition and self-contempt. They make a grave mistake, for by reverence we rouse ourselves to the conviction that we possess capacities for moral progress which otherwise might have lain dormant. Reverence provides a motive to attain something of these qualities which are in Him before whom we tend our homage. It is the condition of that self-reverence which is the sure moral prophylactic against all meanness and vice. Not only does it prevent self-conceit, because it proves that whatever good we may attain there is still an infinitely higher goodness to which we may aspire. Reverence is the assurance of the unlimited possibilities of moral progress in ourselves. He who recognizes this fact knows nothing of servility. Self-reverence is allied to self-knowledge, and the twain are the parents of all moral excellence.

But reverence does not end here. It proceeds to set the standard of our estimate of others. If conceit can never remain in the heart of the reverent man, so neither can selfishness. Having learned what is true and beautiful in God and in

his own experience, he will expect to find it in the lives of his fellow-men. He will not seek it there in vain. All around him he will find endeavours after righteousness, uncomplaining self-sacrifice, patient suffering, unconscious fidelity in lives which to the irreverent and cynical are merely dull or forbidding. Unless the moral vision is purified and trained by reverence we shall never discover the true worth of men. Only he who has reverence for God can truly reverence innocence and purity and truth, for he alone can see it. Others with blinded eyes and hardened hearts despise and reject them as spurious or unworthy.

We are driven to the conviction that reverence for our fellow-men is the necessary condition of all true progress. We cannot allow any man to live in degrading conditions when once we have a true respect for him. Regarding him as a moral and spiritual agent invested with the mysteries of spiritual life, we can never rest content until we give him the opportunity of self-realization. And he who thus regards his fellows will desire others to share the ideals which have so moved the depths of his own being. Reverence seeks to be assured of the worthiness of what it adores, and it is never satisfied until it has the concurrent testimony of many hearts. At its

best reverence is always a social act. Worshippers love to be in one another's company. Reverence is the passport to the communion of saints.

Lord Morley has lamented the decay of reverence in modern democracy, and Lord Bryce, in his recently published work, expresses the same anxiety, though he believes that reverence may revive in the future. We trust that such a revival will take place. Flippancy, conceit, and cynicism render men selfish and contemptuous. They ask, "Who will show us any good?" and, finding no answer to their minds, they cease to believe in goodness. When this happens, reverence dies, and in its death all hope of moral and spiritual progress is destroyed with it.

XXXVII

(OBSTACLES TO) RELIGION

For many reasons besides those that Browning had in mind we are often driven to exclaim with him : " How very hard it is to be a Christian ! " There are some happy souls who find the Christian life easy and pleasant, but for most of us it represents something difficult, something that demands self-sacrifice, and imposes irksome restraints. Its injunctions disregard our natural desires. It pays no attention to the preferences of the individual or the prejudices of society. When we attempt to respond to its challenge we are aware of real strain.

Accepting what they believe to be the Christian faith men find immense difficulty in giving it expression in the circumstances in which they live. Though these unpropitious conditions seem to affect every one, they are more perplexing for some than for others. For many people circumstances would appear to be designed to prevent spiritual aspiration or to kill it at its first appearance. The very rich and the very

poor are placed in the least favourable conditions for the energies of faith, but for all there are circumstances of business, of fortune, or of home life which seem to make a life based on Christian principles and ideals almost impossible. Yet it may be doubted whether any conditions we could devise would make the Christian faith easier for the majority of men, for in the most pleasant conditions of material well-being special snares and hindrances to spiritual development seem to emerge, none the less baneful because they have most attractive forms.

When all is said and done the greatest obstacles for most men lie in themselves, in what we call their character. It is well for us to recognize this fact and to appreciate its significance. We easily blame the faith, or our circumstances, when the causes of our failure lie within ourselves. Some of these we did not create, nor can we escape them. They are there whether we will or not. We recognize, for instance, the influence of heredity on character, and though this does not absolve the normal individual from all responsibility, it certainly affects and modifies it. The ascendancy of a friend or master in early life often holds men in its grip, being all the stronger because they are unconscious of its origin and present power. Of all inequalities in life

the inequality of spiritual capacity is the most puzzling, and we find some who seem at their birth to be smitten with paralysis of all spiritual desire. In considering these matters we are confronted by a mystery we have no power to solve.

Yet we may not cease in our efforts to overcome every obstacle to spiritual development and progress. The struggle is worth much. Even if we are conscious of failure, we may at least comfort ourselves with the reflection that we are not altogether defeated. We may not attain the ideal, but we shall make some progress towards it. For this the discipline of self-knowledge and the courage of self-sacrifice are necessary. We may have a quite mistaken estimate of our character, of our special needs, and of our powers. Men easily invent a mental portrait of themselves, which has but the faintest resemblance to the truth. Thus they set guards against evils which have no attraction for them, and thoughtlessly expose themselves to dangers to which they are the easiest victims. The pathos of self-ignorance is almost overwhelming to a thoughtful spectator of the drama of life. It is the source of all the most humiliating moral disasters of the day. But even when men recognize their weakness they may mistake its nature, and their efforts at

amendment serve only to confuse their judgment and weaken their will.

No one was so conscious of the hindrances within man himself as the Greatest of all Moral Teachers, and no one bade men deal with them so sternly. Hand, foot, eye, the agents of interior desire, He declared, must be sacrificed if these impede progress. Other teachers have insisted on the necessity of renunciation, but even when, like Democritus, who put out his eyes that, undistracted by his surroundings, he might apply himself more closely to philosophical inquiries, they have insisted on self-sacrifice, they have mistaken its purpose and end. Asceticism, whatever form it takes, has no moral value in itself. It is to be practised only to save and develop life ; but when for this purpose it becomes necessary there must be no reserve in self-renunciation. A man must sacrifice his powers of life that he may not perish utterly in the storm of lower passions, in the bewilderment of ambition, or the distractions of the mind debased by its own imaginations. When men speak of the obstacles to religion they should not forget that the most obstinate may exist in themselves.

XXXVIII

RELIGIOUS SENSIBILITY

PROBABLY Englishmen are as susceptible to emotional impression as other people, but they suspect it more and fear to make it manifest. There are gains in this caution, but there may also be no slight losses. The religious life of many suffers from this dread of feeling. In fear of such gusts of fervour as are associated with revivalism, and in equal suspicion of the quieter glow produced by stately ceremonial and appealing music, they shun all that arouses the ardours of religious life.

We are not without justification for this fear of emotion. Nothing may so deceive a man as his sensibility to interior impressions. When emotional response to religious appeal is divorced from obedience to the duties it imposes, the result is always disastrous. Unexpressed in conduct, feeling quickly passes from the extremes of exultation to the depths of despondency, till the moral nature is weakened. Character loses its strength and stability. Admiration for virtue

is mistaken for its practice. The applause of courage, justice, charity is substituted for resolute effort to attain that which is so warmly approved. Moral power is exhausted by enthusiastic commendation of virtues, which leaves us too feeble to practise them.]

Every true emotion has its moral purpose. Without it neither conscience, the mind, nor the will can be roused to its full activity. There must be a passion in faith, an ardour of affection for the ideal. The Christian conception of God, the God who is love, challenges responsive love in the hearts of all who accept it. Unlike Stoicism, which not only bade men act virtuously regardless of emotion, but would have them destroy the least sign of its activity, Christianity begins by feeling and continues to employ it as an essential element in its life. Matthew Arnold's description of religion as morality touched by emotion provides no adequate account of Christianity, but so far as it goes it is not untrue. Emotion is certainly active in all true religion, and nowhere is it more boldly active than in Christianity. But it does something more than touch morality. It is evoked by the consciousness and loving will of One in Whom it can be perfectly satisfied.

A modern scholar has pointed out that the New Testament, like Greek literature at its best,

avoids anything like sentimentalism. There is no encouragement of vague fancies in Christianity. The reality of life's duties is insisted on with impressive clarity of vision and firmness of aim. While emotion is evoked, it never ends in itself, but is intended to be preparatory to and the accompaniment of action. Feeling which evaporates without bearing fruit leads to the sure failure of moral vigour.

He who lets his feelings run
In soft luxurious flow,
Shrinks when hard service must be done,
And faints at every woe.

Men, unlike each other in character and capacities, manifest their divergences in nothing more obviously than in their power of emotional response to the claims of religion. But it is impossible to judge their true condition by the ardour or apathy of their feelings alone. A man may be quick to give enthusiastic applause to self-sacrifice and nobility of life, and yet live in a satisfied self-indulgence. He may be impressed by the beauty and worth of virtue, but only to become eager to commend to others what he will never do himself. On the other hand, some men are temperamentally dull in religious sensibility. No ardours of the spirit glow within them. They are controlled by their minds rather than by

their hearts ; they reason rather than feel. They may be just, true, faithful, but there is little warmth and sunshine in their experience, and in so far as their emotional life is undeveloped or deliberately thwarted, they fail to reach the highest standard of life, because they lack its most exciting adventures.

It is obvious that feeling must be trained and disciplined. Coleridge remarks on the rare occurrence of strong and deep feeling in conjunction with free power and vivacity in its expression. The vital warmth of emotion seldom rises to the surface without becoming hectic and inimical to the life within, the only source of real sensibility. Those, on the other hand, who have their emotions always under restraint tend to lose all sense of joy and become heartless. Feeling in excess or defect must be remedied. The heart of man must act in conjunction with his conscience and his will, and life must express what he feels in service to God and man. Only in this way will feeling be endowed with endurance, the conscience awakened to the permanence of moral distinctions, and the will be strengthened to persevering action.

Emotion is a good servant, but a bad master. It must be put to the service of right thinking and true action. In this transference of feeling

to conduct it may seem to lose its freedom, but it acquires new powers and finds new ways for its expression. The worth of religious sensibility is to be tested in the adventures for truth and goodness to which it calls men, and in the eagerness of self-sacrifice to which it inspires them.] We need not be afraid of feeling. It has a high moral purpose, and without it the fullest satisfactions of life can never be ours. Most men, de Musset once said, have in them a poet who dies young. But why does he die? A purified sensibility in religion, with its quick response to beauty, truth, and goodness, helps us to keep him alive. He who is wise will preserve this gift of feeling in his heart. Thus his faith will be a rule of life spent in obedience to One Who satisfies all his affections, fulfils all his ideals, and endows him with the power of faithful service to the men whom He has created after His likeness, binding all together in the unity of love eternal.

XXXIX

THE SIN OF IGNORANCE

A RELIGION fitted to man's needs must provide him with knowledge of the facts on which it is based. He must have a strong grasp of its truth, which is to be held with the conviction born of its experienced power. This truth may be based on facts which could never have been known but for revelation, and never apprehended but through the authoritative teaching of others. But once received, it is to be known. There must always be room for faith, but knowledge also has its place, and to be without it is to be without the means of response to the full claims of religion.

Indisputably there is much which we cannot know. There are various degrees of nescience. A noble agnosticism recognizes that there is much beyond our powers of apprehension, much which in our present condition it could serve no good purpose for us to know. It is well for us to recognize this. But this is not ignorance; at least it is the knowledge that we do not know. Ignorance is a privation of knowledge of matters

we are fitted to know, of facts which have been disclosed, but have been neglected or rejected, and remain inoperative in experience. There is an involuntary ignorance, by which all are agreed that no fault is incurred; but there is also an ignorance which is the result of prejudice, inattention, or perversity. It is blameworthy and injurious. This ignorance is sin.

In an adequate religion there must be much that is mysterious. Those who would have us banish mystery from religion would destroy it altogether, for they make men's minds but the measure of truth till their eyes can see nothing beyond the limits of their own poor senses. This is the worst of all the idolatries. For such men there is no aspiration, and therefore no progress. Men who ignore the mysteries of faith lose the faculty of worship; what religion does not call us to recognize something or some one beyond man's understanding? The consciousness of mystery, with the reverent humility it evokes, is a guardian of the soul's purity and the antidote of human pride. Yet there must be knowledge.

History is not without examples of the men who claimed to know more than was revealed, and believed themselves to be acquainted with facts which men can never grasp. Gnostics have always been present in the Christian Church.

They belong as much to modern as to ancient times. It is not perhaps often that the Puritans have been placed in the ranks of these teachers, yet frequently they assumed themselves to be in possession of a knowledge of the whole plan of salvation, condemning those who fell short of the carefully mapped-out stages of a process which they declared necessary for all men. They took what they found to be the facts of their own experience as immutably true, and thus fell into the grave error of thinking they knew all that was to be known. Unconscious of the marvellous diversity of men's powers in the apprehension of spiritual realities, or of the still more wonderful varieties of religious experience human nature attains, they claimed a knowledge of the Divine will without the consciousness of their own limitations, and thus became a stumbling-block to many.

After all, knowledge, not ignorance, is the ground of true religion. The most puzzled and baffled man whose consciousness is disordered by prejudice and passion knows enough for present conduct. The great realities of righteousness and truth are before him. Of these he has some knowledge. Let him act in obedience to it and life will reveal more and more of the truth. Those who believe in any measure of Divine

revelation cannot dispute the possibility of attaining some knowledge of its contents. Let men base their religion on this, and they will find how large a sphere is plain to their souls and how clear are the realities of the supernatural world. Do the best you know and you will find it sufficient for your present needs, while your knowledge will continually develop.

We shall never know enough to satisfy curiosity. To a myriad questions we shall find no answer. On all hands we are surrounded by the darkness. The future is unknown, the facts of spiritual life are dimly discerned. Like the ancient Hebrew poet we cry, "Verily, thou art a God that hidest Thyself!" for here and now our knowledge must be partial and limited. Yet the ignorance which disables moral effort is due to our own lusts, passions, and prejudices. Banish these and the clearer vision we shall gain will enable us to discern larger tracts of truth which are now hidden. When Tertullian declared that the simplest Christian knows more than the most accomplished Irreligious philosopher he pointed to a fact of permanent significance. Ignorance is largely of our own making. We increase it by our own perversity, indifference, or worldliness. Therefore we are without excuse for the darkness in which we live. Those who profess any religion

must be held bound to know its contents and significance. This is especially true of all who claim the Christian name. Christianity offers itself as a faith founded on facts to be clearly apprehended. Those facts provide a body of truth which the simplest may understand. God in Christ, His love, His righteousness, His grace, His law, are revealed not as hypotheses to be questioned, or as a philosophy to be recommended to our thought, but as facts to be known. And practice is the exponent of this truth's content, and those who have learnt the mysteries of the spirit by this method do not hesitate to affirm their knowledge. With confidence their Credo passes to an affirmation of certainty. Among the last words of the inspired writings we find the repeated declaration, "We know." It is that knowledge which is the heart's treasure of every faithful disciple.

XL

THE WILL TO BELIEVE

It is easy to become so obsessed by the difficulties of faith, especially as they confront us in historic Christianity, as to forget that there is much in it which is simple, direct, and easily put to the proof. The difficulties are real enough, being partly inherent in life and thought, and partly springing from the historical conditions which have gone to shape Christianity as we know it. But they are not insuperable, and while faith can never be easy to most men, that is no reason why it should be abandoned.

We do not get rid of difficulties when we reject the notion of a supernatural order and turn away from the demands of religion. Unbelief has its problems no less pressing and puzzling. But that point need not be emphasized; here it is enough to remark that though the difficulties of faith have their own moral and spiritual importance, it may be possible that at least some of them arise through our lack of moral perception or the feebleness of our spiritual

apprehension. Their source is often within ourselves.

The first condition for faith is the will to believe. If that is lacking, nothing can be clear, for nothing will be examined with the true motive and in the requisite spirit. An interest in religion, a taste for theological study, a knowledge of philosophical theories, separately or together, are not enough to enable a man to arrive at a true conception of spiritual realities. They are of great service for the explication of doctrine and a true estimate of its history, but useless for the attainment of faith, for which a real and purposeful will to believe is demanded. That to cultivate such a will is our duty will scarcely be denied by anyone who accepts the probability that we live in and are affected by a supernatural order. It is not merely that life is shrouded in mystery, a fact which no one can dispute, but that this mystery has its purpose and that we may know enough about it to be assured of the nature of the Mind and Will it expresses.

While we may welcome the frankest inquiry into what are obstacles to faith, the will to believe must exist before we can hope for success in our effort to overcome them. The recent discussion about the modes of the Incarnation and Resurrection, the nature of Biblical

inspiration, the manner of Christ's coming at the last day, and the attempts made to state these doctrines in terms of modern thought are to be welcomed; but they can lead us very little further in the way of truth unless there is a definite desire to accept the realities for which these terms stand and make them effective springs of faith and conduct. If we must abandon traditional terms, that is only because we desire to see more clearly and hold more strongly than ever the truth which they were intended to express and preserve.

The will to believe is the only proper act of a man who recognizes the mystery of life, his own weakness, his own needs, and the testimony of those who throughout the centuries have declared that they have learned something of faith's secret and show in their own lives the evidence of its transforming power. The witness of the Christian character, after all, cannot be ignored. It persists in the most unlikely surroundings. Throughout the changing centuries, burdened with its sorrows and its wrongs, this character has persisted in the most varied forms, but always visible to the world. There has also been the witness of the Christian Church. We need not disguise its failures, its reactions, its apostasies; yet, looking over the path it has

travelled, who will deny its beneficent power and the infinite value of its gracious ministry to the world? And besides these things, there is within the heart of us all that which refuses to be satisfied with the things of time and sense. We were made for something more than these. What is that something more? Faith only can offer an answer. Unless it is exercised with deliberation and purpose, men will rob themselves of their highest powers and experience.

To be indifferent to the testimony of faith is unworthy, to refuse to examine it is obscurantism of the worst sort. The mind of man cannot come to its fullest activity, his moral powers must be stunted, his affections thwarted, the highest motives of service to others beggared, if he ignores the claims of faith. Superstition is rightly condemned, but the affectations and apathy of unbelief are as real and as disastrous as credulity. Religion is no matter of speculation; and, adapting a sentence from Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, we declare that we do not take religion for our God, but believe God for our religion. Faith costs much, but it has its recompense. Unbelief is bankruptcy. Since it always tends to weaken men's spiritual powers it can have nothing wherewith to meet the last account of life.

When this is admitted it becomes clear that we must order our lives in such a way as to evoke the will to believe and make it operative. For this discipline is required lest we should waste our energies on the things which confuse our vision or unduly distract our energies. We shall seek that quietness which belongs to clear thought, and which, issuing so inevitably in prayer, gives men a new estimate of values and braces them to a renewed moral and spiritual vigour. The issues at stake are not speculative, but practical. They affect life. We must make up our minds about them. To neglect them either through indifference or the distractions of the world must leave a man not only immensely poorer in himself, but without any contribution to the highest interests of his fellow-men.

XLI

CONSTRUCTIVE CHRISTIANITY

AGAIN and again the Church is called upon to insist with all its forces that men shall apply the principles of Christianity to the complex conditions of modern industrial life. It is declared that those conditions can have arisen only because men have ignored the true ideals of social and individual well-being, and that they cannot be permanently improved until we are resolved to reconstruct our corporate life according to the faith which still retains the homage of the great mass of our people.

It might be expected that the leaders of religion would take up this challenge. They are not indifferent to it. They emphasize with increasing vigour the need of accepting Christian standards as the norm of business transactions, and they do this far more often than they insist on the necessity of correctness in theological opinions. In this matter they are "preaching to the times," which are less concerned to enjoy a satisfactory theology than to find a satisfactory law of

life. This is strikingly borne out by the first number of a new quarterly journal edited by Dr William Temple, and entitled *The Pilgrim*, the first three articles of which are devoted to such questions as "The Spiritual Basis of Civilization," "The Divine Mission of Government," and "Christianity and International Problems." We are all learning that Christianity to-day must have its true issue in a new way of life for nations as well as individuals. While a revival of theological study and a re-examination of our ecclesiastical presuppositions cannot be neglected without peril to truth, the immediate demand is for the expression of Christianity as we have received it in terms of life as we have to live it.

We may discover the influence of the demand for what we may call constructive Christianity in many directions. It accounts in a great measure for the growing desire for the reunion of the Churches. That movement is least welcomed where most stress is laid upon tradition either in theology or Church organization, while it is most eagerly desired where men are attempting to bring to the solution of the problems of our corporate life the inspiration of Christian faith and the enabling discipline of Christian ethics. If it is asserted that reunion is to be sought for because it is so evidently in accordance with its

Founder's will, it may be replied that this is only another way of saying that it is His desire that nothing should hinder the effectiveness of the Church's service for the welfare of all men in things temporal as well as spiritual.

The generally recognized need for a revivification of faith must be accompanied by the conviction that this can best be secured by the determined application of Christian ethical standards to practical affairs. Faith must express itself in action before its real meaning and content can be revealed. We must act in order that we may believe, and in further action find out the true significance of the faith we profess. This is the only method by which we can hope to arrive both at a theology which is adequate to the truth and a life which is worthy of our profession of Christianity.

5/12 We do not here and now urge the gain which must come to the Church in a clearer perception of the faith it professes by seeking to express it with the full force of a consecrated will in the complex problems of modern life. There are immediate duties to which the Church is invited and which it must accept before it can hope to commend its faith to the consciences of men. The present industrial unrest serves to drive this home with startling force. Men are not asking for a

theology. The crucial question is, What principles would Christianity have us apply to the present situation? What constructive force has it to offer, for instance, in the readjustment of the varied claims of all those interested in the mining industry? Here it is the challenge to the Church to-day, and its claims are judged by the spirit in which it responds to it. That so many of its members desire to face it frankly is one of the most hopeful signs for the future.

This task cannot be discharged without making demands for self-sacrifice on every side. The politician, the capitalist, the employer, and the wage-earner in the light of these principles must be judged by their readiness to serve the whole community. This is the Christian ideal of practical living in a true brotherhood founded in a common faith in the Father of all. It must be expressed in mutual service. We may venture the statement that until this constructive Christianity is tried we shall neither learn the true nature of the faith nor attain national well-being. The contents of faith must be spelt out in the plain language of conduct. We must show our faith by our works.]

XLII

CRISIS AND CHARACTER

ANYONE who has considered the arrangement of the Church's year must have been struck by its apparently casual lop-sidedness. For roughly six months the Calendar follows the main events and periods of the human life of Jesus Christ, culminating in Ascension Day ; and the seal is set on the whole record by Whit Sunday, which ranks as the birthday of the Christian Church. Trinity Sunday forms a climax and watershed, and gives its name to all the Sundays of the remaining six months. With the steady, monotonous sequence of "Sundays after Trinity" we enter upon a sort of ecclesiastical Long Vacation.

After Whit Sunday we take another step forward which is also a very important step back. Having traced the self-revelation of God in and through His Son, and commemorated the gift of His Spirit, we stop to sum up the whole of what has been revealed in that great formula of the eternal, changeless Being of the "One God in Persons Three" which we know as the doc-

trine of the Blessed Trinity. For the Church of England it is the festival of the Nature of God—the New Testament equivalent of what the Old Testament calls “The Name of the Lord”—which marks the apex of the ecclesiastical year, not the festival of the Church’s birthday. And this at once gives the keynote of the Anglican outlook and indicates two things. First, that all “development” must be in harmony with the great conception of God—His nature, character, and ways of work—which the doctrine of the Trinity enshrines; secondly, that the most characteristically Christian line of development is not the further complication of theology, but the bringing of human life and character more and more into concord with the Divine.

The end of religion, in fact, is not revelation only, but the application to life of what is revealed. The essence of religion is not to be sought in historical events, nor in religious acts commemorating them, but in the affections stirred by those events and in the attitude resulting from those acts. Crisis, it is true—the interruption of the normal by the exceptional—must always play a part in religion. An absolutely equable, undifferentiated life, “esteeming every day alike,” is neither natural nor, indeed, possible for individuals or for Christian Churches.

But a succession of spiritual crises can never be the same as genuine spiritual life, whether the crises take the form of constant observance of holy seasons or of constant reproduction of certain exalted spiritual states. The end of life and of religion is character, with consonant action following from it. The element of crisis is only valuable in so far as it either reveals or develops character, or introduces a truer normality than it breaks up. Each festival of the story of Jesus Christ focuses attention on something in the Divine Character which the crisis in question—His Nativity, temptation, passion, resurrection, ascension—brings more prominently to light; and the effect of each such revelation on those who observe the festival should be to draw them into likeness to Him at that point. Such is the *rationale* of the first half of the Church of England's year—the half devoted to crisis. Then, on Trinity Sunday, we leave the whole element of crisis behind, sum up the revelation given, stand face to face with "Him with Whom we have to do" and "without Whom we can do nothing," and set out, in St Paul's arresting words, to "be imitators of God, as dear children." The very absence of break in the long procession of Sundays after Trinity might almost seem to be symbolic of the plodding and unceasing quality

of that fight for character which is the one commanding interest and duty of the life that "is hid with Christ in God." The whole message of the second half of the Church's year might be summed up in those other words of Paul, the prince of practical mystics: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both will and deed on behalf of His own ideal."

XLIII

(OVERCOMING) THE WORLD

HAZLITT, in one of his most characteristic essays, entitled "On Knowledge of the World," denies that this knowledge is "the fruit of experience and observation, or of a various, practical acquaintance with men and things." On the contrary, it seems to him to arise out of a peculiar construction and turn of mind, depending largely on an instinctive knowledge of our own interest: a species of selfishness, a ramification of the law of self-preservation.

There is much acuteness of observation, not without the sarcasm of a superior person, in Hazlitt's thesis, and those who limit their lives to the sphere with which he deals cannot read it without recognizing its pungency. It may be urged, however, that the essay moves on too low a plane to be of real service. After all, there are people who have no desire "to get on in the world" by compliance with its standards or submitting to its prejudices. Their knowledge of its character and aims does not tempt them to comply with its spirit or to be dazzled by the rewards it offers to those who serve it diligently. There have been men, though they are not now

so numerous as in the past, who have held the world and its affairs, if not radically evil in itself, at least the cause of many subtle temptations from which protection could best be secured by renouncing it. But others, though remaining in the world, have gained a truer knowledge of its character only to affirm their condemnation of it with deeper conviction.

213 [The reader of the New Testament finds varied and urgent warnings in its pages against conformity to the world. Men are bidden to fight against it, to be on the watch against its machinations and allurements, to regard it as under the control of the Evil One. But we must bear in mind that this world against which so many warnings are given is not the ordered society of mankind concerned with its business and pleasures and making the most of its powers of temporal satisfaction. Such a world must be used as the appointed sphere of our education, though always care is to be taken that it be made our servant and not our master. The Christian man must live in it, and being in it there is no reason for abstention from its interests. It affords him many opportunities of service. The perils to which it brings him serve to the development of his moral powers. Acquiring its rewards he can devote them to purposes above its own reach. But he may not be content only to take what he finds in the world,

he has to give something to it in fulfilment of his life's duty. Indeed, it is only through the agency of devout men that the world can be saved from itself, for in spite of its instinct of self-preservation it would collapse by the action of its disintegrating forces but for the wholesome influence of faithful men who preserve it from dissolution by bringing to it powers which it cannot secure for itself.

813 Yet we are warned against a world with which, it is declared, the Christian can have no fellowship. He must renounce it entirely. This is a hard saying, and, indeed, an incomprehensible one until we understand that this world against which we must battle stands for human life in so far as it refuses to acknowledge spiritual values and leaves God out of its reckoning. It has its religion, but it is a worship of idols. It has its code of honour, but it holds that the worst sin is to be found out. It has its fellowship, but it is founded on a watchful hold of what makes for each man's own gain. It has no true ideals, no wide horizons, no pure light of heaven shines on its affairs. God is not in all its thoughts.

Worse than all, this world of human convention has no future. It ends with itself. Its culture, wealth, art, skill, have their splendours, but they end in vacuity and darkness, and there they leave its devotees. A man can take nothing with

him from this world when he sets out on that last mysterious journey from which there is no return. It may suggest to its successful servants the promise of survival in the memory of others, forgetting that human memory quickly fades and the past soon vanishes into nothingness. It has no hope for the individual. We need not wonder that the world's philosophy is inevitably pessimistic.]

Men are masters of the world as soon as they see it in its true nature and proper perspective, and it is Faith that gives this vision with the victory it ensures. Here "upon this bank and shoal of time" there are realities of the spirit, in obedience to which we overcome the world's allurements. If we fight it with its own weapons success will make us more its victims. If we settle in it as its citizens we shall become its slaves. He who would be its master must have a different test of values than any to be found in its judgments, seeking guidance from beyond its wisdom, content to forfeit its prizes for the higher rewards of the Spirit. It is faith in God which enables a man to face the world's threatenings or blandishments with confidence. All that has carried men forward to truth, to self-sacrifice, to liberty, to pure religion, has been done in face of the world's opposition. But sooner or later faith overcomes it and leads men forward to the City of God.

XLIV

REDEEMING THE TIME

THE Church will not be too proud to use every occasion which comes in human life to claim from men the full measure of their days. Any open door will be entered. Every pause filled. When therefore the end of a year makes a brief interval between the acts, the Church can enter with its solemn claim that men must work the works of God while it is day, for the night cometh. The taking down of a calendar, the bells at midnight, the alteration of the date upon a letter—all things this day conspire to raise the problem of time and eternity. What birthdays do for men one by one, this day does for them together. It is a favourable occasion to bid them redeem the time.

It is another task which falls to the scientist and philosopher. They must think together the conceptions of time and eternity. The Church has something more urgent to do for the plain man. Amid all such wonderful and mysterious matters one thing is clear; there can be no

trifling with the business, which must be transacted in time or left undone. Each year, each day, is complete in itself; the night falls, and though other days follow, that day remains with its tasks done or undone. It is redeemed or lost. There is no overtime to be made in the business of life.

The Christian attitude to time is one of apparent inconsistency. In one breath it declares that we spend our years as a tale that is told; time is short, eternity is long; "leave *Now* to dogs and apes": so the defiances and taunts are cast at a dying world. And yet these passing days may be in eternity, it declares. They may be redeemed and stored where neither moth nor rust corrupts; they may be made immortal by the achievements and glories of the Divine Kingdom wrought out on this earthly scene. That is the only abiding chronology. By its measures a thousand years may be as a day, and a day as a thousand years.

In the Scriptures time is measured only according to the value of the things which entered into the Kingdom of God. The year in which King Uzziah died is rescued because in that same year Isaiah saw the Lord; another year was marked in the memory of the Church—it was the year in which their Lord was crucified. Caiaphas might

be High Priest, Pontius Pilate Procurator of Judæa, but the year was redeemed by the offering of the Cross. That is its claim to immortality.

For those who read the story of 1921 according to these values there may be already in their personal lives some enduring gain which singles out this year. One hour of vision, one word of courage spoken, one deed of service in which they took up their cross—these things may live and mark this year. But when mankind seeks to know what has redeemed 1921 in the whole range of its life, no one can say yet with any finality. All the reports are not returned yet ; some gain, unknown to men now, may make this year shine out in undying splendour. One thing alone can be said with assurance before the world turns its face forward : out of the past year only that can live which belongs to the Kingdom of God, and nothing that belongs to that Kingdom can ever perish. But the book, so far as that year is concerned, is closed.

That occasion is over now. There is no place for remorse, with its paralysing power. The return to the past is in vain if it sets men brooding over tasks undone. There is still time to be redeemed ; and though the night has fallen upon that day, another is beginning ; and that has

its tasks, which demand all the powers which can be brought into play. The burden of the other years is not meant to make men despair, but to rouse them to action.

And if guidance is to be sought from the character of the closing year, the Church may face the coming time without despair. It is a great time which is now within its grasp. The year to be redeemed has all the marks of a day of crisis. The hours of weariness which came upon the stunned nations seem to be ending. Something new shines before them. Whether it is to be achieved or not will depend upon the living faith and moral energy of mankind. There will be no drifting into any noble estate. The coming year can be redeemed or lost. Upon it, too, the night will fall—whether upon a day of distinction in the Kingdom of God or upon a day of failure and shame no man can tell. But to a living Church, girding itself for its task, no hope is forbidden. It can redeem 1922 from the bondage of corruption into the glory of the Eternal Kingdom.

XLV

EASTER FAITH

Resurrection

EVERYONE will admit that belief in a future life, where it is held with conviction, must have a dominant influence on men's attitude to this life. Our conception of the hereafter cannot but affect our attitude to the present. We may even give to our belief in the future an exaggerated importance and allow it to become practically the only factor in religion. This happened in ancient Egypt, where the elaborate tombs, carefully embalmed bodies, the magnificent monuments, all provided to secure future happiness, show how belief in continued existence after death may be so exaggerated as to lead men to forget the duties and the claims of life in this world.

Our danger is that, though we may not reject belief in a future existence, we do not hold it with conviction and refuse to accept its implications. We are overwhelmed by the claims of this world, and, conscious of our ignorance of the nature, conditions, occupations of that other life, we put it aside as having no relation to present duty. Many

are puzzled by contrariant hopes and fears in the thought of their waking out of that last sleep. But the wise man cannot be content to be the sport of such uncertainty. "If a man die, shall he live again?" That is a practical question. It is more than a speculative subject for discussion. Our answer to it must determine the moral quality of our life here and now.

Christianity offers something more than a belief in survival after death. It is not content to declare the immortality of the soul. That question is not discussed in the New Testament. Easter Day announces the triumph of man over death, his victory over it in the fulness of his manhood in body and soul. We need not demand a perfectly consistent harmony of the Resurrection narratives. Let it be granted that they contain difficulties we cannot solve. The fact they announce is that He who was crucified was not held captive by death, that He burst its bonds, and for ever lives true man in the fulness of His manhood, unimpeded by the frailties and limitations of humanity, in the exultant freedom of a glorious immortality. Why should this be incredible? Is not the evidence offered to us as full as we have any right to expect, as convincing as we can demand? Of course, faith is necessary to accept it, for this

is not merely an event which took place nearly two millenniums ago—it is a fact of present power. He who rose still lives. And His resurrection is the assurance of our resurrection. His Easter Day tells us there is also an Easter Day for every one of His fellows.

Those who would make the Resurrection begin and end with the resuscitation of the body mistake its nature and miss its real significance. Why spend our time over theories of the mode of the Resurrection? Why engage in controversy about the relation of the body of flesh to the body of glory? These matters are beyond us. Easter Day does not provide us with a theory nicely adjusted to our categories of thought; it offers instead an assurance that human life not only persists, but persists in the plenitude of its powers, in conscious victory over death and all that death implies to sinful and suffering humanity. However we may understand it, the Resurrection is our manhood's victory over all that would debase, defile, and cripple it. The bitterness of life's struggle, the darkness of death, the awful mystery of evil are not ignored. But these do not end all. Man is the victor; at length all things will be made subject to him, and he shall walk in the glorious freedom of triumphant immortality.

The Resurrection is the determining factor of Christianity. All that went before prepared for it ; all that follows lives in its power. Wherever it has been accepted men have borne themselves confidently, knowing that, whatever may be the fortunes of life in the end, victory must rest with what is true and good. It is the best things in the world which drive us to believe in the assurance of Easter Day. This is its satisfaction, and the soul of man goes out to appropriate the fruits of its triumph as his own rightful, enduring heritage.

Heaven born, the soul a heavenward course must hold ;
 Beyond the invisible world she soars to seek
 (For what delights the sense is false and weak)
 Ideal Form, the universal mould,
 The wise man, I affirm, can find no rest
 In that which perishes : nor will he lend
 His heart to aught that doth on time depend.

We may easily lose our sense of proportion or fail to see life in its proper perspective. The things near us appear unduly large, and they block our vision. We are so absorbed in what lies about our feet that we ignore what can be seen only when we look up into the pure light of heaven. Easter Day assures us that there is no true concern of man, nothing that affects him in soul or body, that may not be transfigured with heavenly glory. It bids us confront the

pains and the troubles of life with confidence, to meet its duties, however onerous, with masterful energy, and to welcome the last grim antagonist as the Good Man Death with the knowledge that he is sent only to convoy us to the Eternal Presence robed in the grace of Easter.

XLVI

(RELIGION AS / REDEMPTION

RELIGION has great allies within the human heart, and chief among them is the longing for deliverance. Its promises are never so powerful as they sound to the man who cries out of the depths, Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? One discovery is always made afresh by the children of men ; it is their discovery of themselves set against the background of a strange world, which makes stern demands upon them. Life proves too great for them. They are condemned to see a vision of themselves at peace with the universe. The vision will not depart, and the peace will not come, and they find no peace. Because this experience is for ever repeated, and this longing remains for ever unsatisfied, mankind is never insensitive to a religion of redemption.

Students of religion, isolating it for the purpose of their analysis from living things, may easily misunderstand the true appeal of religion. They study it as an interpretation of the world ;

they hear what it has to say to the cry, Who will give us light? and they wonder why it is that this religion or that has persisted from age to age. The answers have varied from time to time, and often they are insufficient. Such students forget one fact; the human beings who listened to these offers were not concerned, first of all, with intellectual problems; they were demanding in the desperate accents of dying men, What must we do to be saved?

"Christianity is for the negro," writes Dr Albert Schweitzer, "the light that shines amid the darkness of his fears; it assures him that he is not in the power of nature-spirits, ancestral spirits, or fetishes, and that no human being has any sinister power over another, since the will of God controls everything that goes on in the world."

I lay in cruel bondage,
Thou cam'st and mad'st me free.

For the negro, beset by the terrors of his untamed world, the cry is for deliverance from fear. His world is too much for him, because it is a world of sinister powers, whose wars and purposes he can only discern in part, and for his ignorance he will suffer. But though the world changes its character to man as he leaves behind his primitive fears, it is still for him at every stage a strange land, and he still cries out for redemption.

Christianity brings answers to many cries of the human spirit, but from the first it has come as a religion of redemption. It has offered to make those who receive it free from all their pitiable weakness of will, from the terrors which they share with all who have eyes to see this world as it is, and from the fear which waits upon the far horizon. There is little doubt that the first converts to the Christian faith were conscious that they had been brought out of bondage into glorious liberty. They walked firmly and joyfully through the ways of a vanquished world, because they were no longer its bondmen, but its lords.

Among Christian communities there is often serious thought upon the essentials of their faith. What are the conditions of survival? Which among them are the best adapted to stand the fiery tests of the present and future hour? Much will remain a matter of uncertainty; whether or not the Church will take this or that ecclesiastical form, no one can tell. But if the story of the spiritual history of mankind is not now to be falsified there will be no place in the heart of humanity for any religion which is not one of redemption. Through all the years of this solemn process whereby man is to return to God there will be awakened in him the cry for deliver-

ance. Within him will be the quest for perfection. He will have eternity in his heart, even while he is most occupied with passing things. He will seek to the end not for light only, but for peace, and all the energy and freedom of soul which peace can give.

Other cries may come to sound in his memory as far off and remote, but not this cry: Who shall deliver me? That is a timeless and universal cry. And no religion will be able to satisfy the heart of man which does not offer to him an answer to fill his mouth with laughter and his tongue with singing—Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory!

XLVII

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

CHRISTIANITY has its own doctrine of the future life, and its distinctive character should be understood. It is true that men in all ages have had their questionings, fears, and hopes about their fortunes when they shall enter the darkness which is called death. Every religion which claims acceptance must deal with this universal experience. It is never far from men's thoughts. Christianity resembles other faiths in dealing with this matter, though its own special teaching marks it out from the rest.

In the judgment of many the Bible's teaching on immortality is strangely limited and obscure. It fails to answer many questions men constantly frame, questions of the most poignant interest to everyone. The comparative study of religions shows that other faiths are much more communicative about the fortunes of men hereafter than Christianity. If we are to judge by the additions made to its doctrine in primitive times we may come to the conclusion that to

many Christians the New Testament references to life after death have seemed defective. But curiosity about what is beyond this life is never satisfied by the inspired writers. More than once the Master was asked questions about the fate of the departed, but His replies were intended rather to impress the interrogators with the need of present faithfulness than to satisfy their curiosity about the hereafter. When men asked, "Lord, are they few that be saved?" His reply was, "Strive to enter in by the narrow door."

When the apostles thought to assure themselves of future rewards He offered them a partnership in His present sufferings. On one occasion the presence of a man born blind suggested the question, "Rabbi, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?" Probably the disciples who put this question had no definite opinion as to the pre-existence of the soul, though there are more than indications that a belief in this doctrine existed in Jewish contemporary thought. They may have been influenced by a theory of antenatal sin, or they may have regarded the man's blindness as a sign that his must be a life of sin. It is clear that belief in the soul's pre-existence, similar to the Buddhist doctrine of re-birth, was found among Christians. Origen, as is well known,

believed in the soul's pre-existence and re-incarnation. If it is asserted that there is nothing in the New Testament to forbid such a belief, it may be replied that the apostolic writers, like their Master, refrained from discussing any matter which had no immediate importance for faithfulness in the duties of this life. Their teaching about the past, as about the future, was always subsidiary to the needs of the present.

It may be urged that belief in the pre-existence of the soul has a high moral value in enabling men to bear the fortunes of this life. A European asked a blind Indian by what accident he had lost his sight, and immediately and without any sign of bitterness received the answer, "By some crime committed in a former birth." The afflicted man found in this faith the power to bear his misfortune without complaint. Christianity is not concerned with such theories. Belief in transmigration may or may not be as legitimate as belief in annihilation or endless retribution, but Christianity is content to point out that every man has all the potentialities of progress to perfection. The past has not destroyed them, while the future is the creation of the present. Nothing is revealed of life past or future but what affects present duty.

It is wise to recognize our ignorance of what

is beyond this life and to realize that to know that we cannot know is often our highest knowledge. Psychical research when pursued on scientific lines may bring no small gain by its work, but we shall misjudge its possibilities if we expect that it will do anything to minimize or increase the profound significance of this present life weighted with all its amazing powers and responsibilities. We may hope that if it should prove possible to have any kind of communication with those who have passed beyond this world of time and space, the result will be a deeper conception of the meaning of life on earth and a more solemn insistence on the immense issues which depend on our discharge of its duties. But if this is regarded as the greatest gain from such research, we are bound to point out that this advantage is already offered us by the Christian's faith and hope.

One test we have provided for us as the norm of all our thinking of life. Whatever it may be and whatever it may become for each of us, nothing in experience can conflict with the fact of the divine Fatherhood. That was the keystone of Christ's teaching, and the truth about God and about ourselves is always in harmony with it. Those who accept that assurance have a sufficient guide. Whence we come and whither

we go we cannot tell. Mystery is everywhere. One thing is revealed. God is the Father of all. None is beyond the ministry of His infinite love. That is the truth proclaimed by Him whose gospel brought life and immortality to light, and it is attested by all those who have been content to follow Him. When they have done that, life past, present, and future is found to be life in Him, in a unity of life which is eternal because it is Divine.

XLVIII

LIGHT FROM HEAVEN

A WRITER in a current number of a review devoted to religion and philosophy places the story of the Magi's visit to Bethlehem among a group of narratives which he describes as intrinsically incredible. Is the record nothing more than a pleasing legend? At least it is a true picture of the way in which men attain the satisfaction of their soul's desire. That eager inquiry and sustained effort are necessary for the apprehension of the truth will not be disputed by anyone who knows history or has reflected on his own experience.

The Star of Bethlehem shows us that the true source of the ideal after which men strive is never found in themselves. They do not make it. It is no product of the imagination, of reason, or of aspiration. It comes from beyond this world. It shines above the limits of that which we can measure. Men must look up to the heavens before they can discover it. There are many things around them beautiful, inspiring,

and true. While nothing is gained, and much may be lost, by despising the power and worth of what are rightly or wrongly called the natural virtues, our manhood cannot reach its highest end if it depends only on the things of this world. Men must find the star in the heavens, for only those who follow wherever its light may lead them can satisfy desire and attain the goal of life.

The Magi saw the star while engaged in the work to which they had devoted their lives. Astrology is associated in our minds with pretence and superstition ; it is almost a synonym for falsehood. No doubt those seekers in the East shared the errors and affectations which are never far from men ; but they were seekers after the truth ; they looked for it and expected to find it. And when they saw what they believed would lead to it they followed in scorn of every difficulty and at whatever sacrifice their journey might bring to them. Such is truth's demand.

But no one will go out on so difficult an enterprise unless he has prepared himself by diligent duty in the commonplace tasks of earth. Unless a man is faithful in the work of this world he will see no star in the heavens above him. Not until he has proved himself here will his eyes be pure and keen enough to discern what is

above him, beyond the mists of his own passions and the shadows of the world's glare. We hesitate to accept the judgment that men in the present day are increasingly indifferent to the things of the spirit. No doubt there is widespread irresponsiveness to the claims of religion, and strange blindness to the realities of the soul. Yet most men if they stayed to reflect would confess the presence of a great desire for spiritual satisfactions. But are they first loyal and true in homely duty and daily work? Are they faithful in that which is least, that they be entrusted with more?

It is the man faithful in daily work who sees the star in the East. Revelation has no meaning for others. At best they talk of discovery, forgetting that only that which is already existent can be found. Yet even for the faithful the star may be obscure, for its light is frail and its rays strike the earth only in faint gleams. It is not sufficient to banish the shadows. The darkness still remains, but the true light shines above to guide those who follow it.

That no day of life may lack romance,
The spiritual stars rise nightly, shedding down
A private beam into each several heart.

Suns haste to set, that so remoter lights
Beckon the wanderer to his vaster home.

Perplexity may haunt the true seeker, but so long as he remains faithful he may be assured that the light still shines. What he has already seen gives him his own interior light while it carries him forward with new energies in the great quest for truth, beauty, goodness. It will not fail. It is eternal in the heavens.

And what did these seekers find at last? A Child in His Mother's arms. What did they gain? A fit object for their worship. That is all, but that is enough, for it is everything. Men in this world are never made content by the satisfactions of desire. It is their happiness that the great quest is never finally completed in this world. Every stage attained only leads them onward to a further manifestation of the Divine Will. The Magi came to the Child, but they knew nothing of what was in store for Him or for themselves. Truth was still in its infancy. There was much hidden, but enough was revealed to create and inspire their adoration. It is in worship that the true seeker finds his complete satisfaction. Here is life's highest experience, for in it man finds the fullest activity of his whole manhood.

One of the *agrapha* attributed to Christ by a third-century writer gives expression to the seeker's truest satisfactions.

Jesus saith :

Let not him who seeketh cease from seeking until he
has found ;

And when he hath found, he shall be amazed ;

And when he hath been amazed, he shall reign ;

And when he hath reigned, he hath rest.

The awed wonder of the seeker is the spirit
of worship. In this completion of aspiration he
is true king, for he has come to his inheritance
in a heavenly country. There he finds rest in the
attainment of his quest.

DISCARD

BV Life's true values : selected essays from
4510 "The Times" / arranged by Sir James Marchant
A1 ; with an introduction by the Archbishop of
L5 York. -- London : Allenson, [19--?]
240p. ; 19cm.

1. Christian life--Addresses, essays, lectures
I. Marchant, Sir James, 1867-1956, ed. II.
Times, London.

CCSC/mmb

228081

